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THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War **50¢**

Volume 34, Number 1 Spring 2004

Anybody But Bush

VVAW National Staff and Coordinators

As an organization, Vietnam Veterans Against the War cannot support candidates for public office. **BUT IF VVAW COULD ENDORSE A CANDIDATE, THE LAST CANDIDATE FOR PUBLIC OFFICE THAT WE WOULD EVER ENDORSE WOULD BE GEORGE W. BUSH.**

Bush has waged the first acknowledged pre-emptive war in U.S. history. In the name of weapons of mass destruction not found, in the name of terrorist connections not found, and in the name of defending against a nonexistent threat to the United States, Bush has senselessly squandered the lives of hundreds of American youths and the lives of thousands of Iraqis of all ages (children, adults, and the elderly). Testimony from members of his own administration strongly suggests that this action by the president was premeditated.

To support this war and tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, the Bush administration has mortgaged our children's futures with the greatest deficit in U.S. history and exported (or outsourced) millions of jobs greatly needed by less wealthy Americans, including the veterans of Bush's wars.

Bush's attempt to present himself as a combat pilot landing on an aircraft carrier while denying the absence of his record of even minimal active service is a slap in the face to all of us who did serve.

Bush's treatment of American veterans of military service is unconscionable. While making massive cuts in veterans' services to veterans of prior wars, this administration has shamelessly ignored the needs of a whole new generation of veterans suffering from physical and mental disabilities that are the results of this administration's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Hence it is with certainty and a sense of pride that we fail to support, and state our non-endorsement of, George W. Bush.

VVAW Participation in March 20, 2004 Demonstrations

The following is a synopsis of some of the activities VVAW was involved in nationwide on March 20, 2004 in opposition to the current war of the Bush adminsitration.

Denver, Colorado
Charles Elliston
VVAW

The day started out cool, but clear and sunny. By 10:30 a.m. about 40 people had assembled at the flagpole of the Auraria Campus in downtown Denver for the 11:00 a.m. rally. I began to think the event would be anticlimactic compared to last year's march in February. Then the crowd grew rapidly, and by the time the actual march began, I would guess at least couple of thousand peace activists were in attendance. Media estimates aired on NPR this morning were placed at "thousands" of marchers.

There were four active VVAW members in attendance. Several other veterans approached us during the day to offer their support and appreciation. Many members of mainstream and alternative media were busy interviewing one VVAW member who showed up in a full-dress, Class A uniform.

We marched from the campus into the downtown financial district, passing the offices of Halliburton along the way. I was surprised at the relatively light police presence. Their function was — correctly — mostly traffic safety and flow. We were not granted a parade permit, so we were constrained to remain on the public sidewalks. Parade organizers advised us that riot squads and SWAT teams were in readiness, but I never saw any evidence of this. Perhaps not surprising, since the crowd was law-abiding and peaceful, if colorful and somewhat noisy.

After Halliburton, the marchers proceeded through several blocks of the downtown area and then paused at a memorial to "The Unknown Soldier." Several rally organizers from Denver peace groups along with the four VVAW representatives placed flowers at the base of the memorial. Although the memorial is adjacent to a public sidewalk, in a publicly-accessible plaza, there were temporary signs posted declaring the site to be "Private Property — Trespassing Prohibited."

Milwaukee VVAW - March 20, 2004

The march organizers advised us that we risked arrest and incarceration for trespass by placing the flowers at the memorial. Some of our members have been jailed previously for acts of civil disobedience, and those who had not decided that the symbolism, and the possible publicity arising from arrest for such a peaceful act, justified the risk. Pleasantly, the authorities took no action, and the march continued to a large plaza in front of the Federal Building for the closing rally.

At the rally, several speakers talked about the experiences of their children or other relatives who had served or were currently on duty in Iraq. Others discussed the folly of using preemptive war as a means of projecting

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VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

VVAW National Office

Last Revised Spring 2004; references provided at end

Did VVAW lengthen the war by protesting it?

The suggestion that VVAW lengthened the war comes from convicted arms dealer, perjurer, and media personality Oliver North. In a cited quote from North (Greg Lewis, "Fellow Travelers, Useful Idiots, and Other Innocents," *Washington Dispatch*, 2/19/2004), North alleges that Giap in a 1985 book stated that John Kerry and VVAW lengthened the war and insured the ultimate Vietnamese victory. Giap published no 1985 book. **THERE IS NO SUCH QUOTE** in either of General Giap's two post-war publications (Vo Nguyen Giap, *Unforgettable Months And Years*, Southeast Asia Program, Dept. of Asian Studies, Cornell University, 1975 or *How We Won the War* (coauthored by Van Tien Dung) RECON Publications, 1976).

This particular slander on VVAW and Kerry was disseminated on the Internet from a column in the *Washington Dispatch* by Greg Lewis, February 19, 2004. (Complete article: http://www.washingtondispatch.com/article_8129.shtml) In reaction to responses to his original column, on March 2, 2004, Greg Lewis retracted his initial accusation against Kerry with: "A few weeks ago in a column about Kerry, I referred to what has turned out to be an 'urban legend.' Specifically, based on a 'news' item that appeared on NewsMax.com, I repeated a reference to a volume of memoirs supposedly published by North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap in 1985 as the source of an assertion by Colonel Oliver North. After a reader requested a reference to Giap's 1985 "Memoirs," I did research that convinced me no such volume exists. For that matter, I haven't been able to verify through Fox News that Colonel North actually made the comments he is said to have made and which I repeated. My apologies to Colonel North and to WashingtonDispatch.com readers for including inadequately verified material in my piece on Kerry."

Complete article: http://www.washingtondispatch.com/article_8268.shtml.

Did VVAW betray the troops by protesting the war?

What you are asking is whether, by protesting, VVAW caused the US to lose the war. The answer is no. The Vietnamese fought the French, the Japanese (for us during WWII), the French again, the US, and the Chinese — one after the other. None of these world-class militaries managed to defeat their nationalistic fervor. We couldn't have won — using conventional tactics.

From its beginning, VVAW has held no value greater than supporting those serving their country in the armed forces. By the time VVAW demonstrated in Washington, DC, US forces in Vietnam were verging on chaos. Nixon had invoked the strategy of Vietnamization and begun steady troop withdrawals that continued until the end of the war. By 1971, the number of US troops in Vietnam had been cut in half. Acts of violence (fraggings) against officers and NCO's had increased. Drug and alcohol abuse were prevalent. Instances in which GIs refused to go on patrol were recorded. Combat patrols by US forces were halted in fall 1971 as Vietnamese forces took over that task (Boyle, 85-103; Curry, 7-12; Savage & Gabriel, 340-376; Wells, 474-475).

Though our military and our government may attempt to portray "the troops" as a homogeneous group, the military is made up of individuals. As many current VVAW members who were fighting in Vietnam in 1971 will tell you, VVAW was trying to stop the senseless waste of life. Whenever there has been a choice between the welfare of GIs and the interests of politicians, VVAW has always chosen to support the welfare of fighting men and women (Stacewicz, 196-229). Honor the warrior not the war.

How has VVAW supported veterans and active duty GIs?

In the mid '70s to mid '80s when traditional veterans groups were calling Vietnam veterans losers, VVAW was the first veterans organizations to set up rap groups to deal with traumatic after-effects of war, setting the example for readjustment counseling at Vet Centers now (Hunt, 86-87, 221n.65; Nicosia, 162-165, 548). VVAW exposed the shameful neglect of many disabled vets in VA Hospitals (Hunt, 40, 186; Nicosia, 317-320; Stacewicz, 209, 262, 283) and helped draft legislation to improve educational benefits and create job programs (Stacewicz, 23, 163, 181; Wells, 489). VVAW fought for amnesty for war resisters, including vets with bad discharges (Nicosia, 309). We helped make known the negative health effects of exposure to chemical defoliants and the VA's attempts to cover-up these conditions as well as their continued refusal to provide treatment and compensation for many Agent Orange Victims (Hunt, 183; Nicosia, 88; Stacewicz, 350-355). VVAW has supported Gulf War vets in their struggles with Gulf War Syndrome (*Veteran*, vol. 33, no. 1, p. 21) and deleted uranium (DU) ammunition (*Veteran*, vol. 33, no. 1, p. 2, p. 24).

What is Senator John Kerry's relationship to VVAW?

Since Vietnam Veterans Against the War's inception in 1967, tens of thousands of vets, GIs and sup-

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Thanks to Jeff Danziger, Vietnam veteran and political cartoonist, for his generous contributions to this issue. Thanks also to Billy Curmano for "Oxy, the Smart Bomb," Benjamin Grosser, George Weber, Betty Jang, Brooke Anderson, John Zutz, Julie Duran and others for their photos.

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For email addresses go to our website at www.vvaw.org
If you need a speaker for an event or class visit or interview, please contact the person nearest you.
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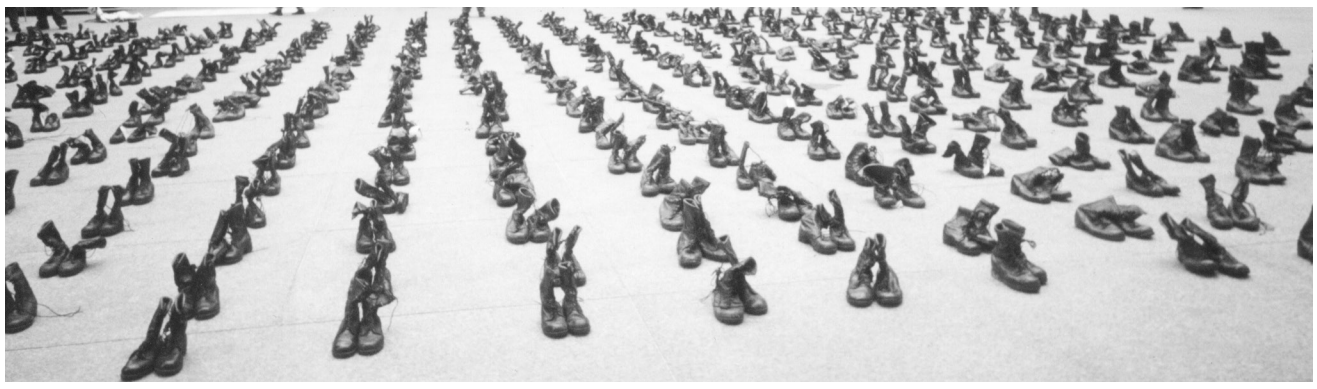

Commemoration of 500 dead U.S. Soldiers - Daley Plaza, Chicago

Fraggin'

Bill Shunas

About a year ago, George Bush landed on an aircraft carrier on the high seas off San Diego, startling the local surfers. This dramatic effort was to declare victory in Iraq and to show the world that Bush really was a military man. At about the same time, real troops were coming back from the war in need of medical attention. They found that said attention was lacking. At Fort Stewart and Fort Knox they were waiting up to eight weeks while being housed in World War II barracks under spartan conditions.

About half a year ago, Bush made a surprise visit to Iraq. He spent his time there in a mess hall, eating and bonding with the troops. It looked good on TV, but it's too bad that he hadn't loaded Air Force One with Kevlar vests (The A-1 chickee bobo modern lifesaving version of the flak jacket). It seems that the Bushies can start a war but not properly supply equipment for the troops. It's bad enough that relatives back home have had to send the troops things like mosquito netting, flashlights, canteens, and in the case of Afghanistan, warm gloves. After a parent bought a Kevlar vest for a son in Iraq and it was reported in the ***Washington Post***, Congress took it upon itself to add funding for the vests in the Pentagon budget. This enabled U.S. troops to be as well-fitted as the Mongolian contingent.

Next month, Bush is to go to France for the ceremonies on the 60th anniversary of D-Day. There he will likely rub shoulders with some former soldiers who pay the disabled veteran tax. (That's not exactly a tax, but is a requirement that 20-year military veterans get disability compensation deducted from their retirement pay, so they call it a tax.) While seeking votes in the 2000 election, Bush promised to fix this. Then, when it came before Congress, he reneged, sending Rummy to tell them that fixing the problem would be too costly. So Bush will party and get down with the old vets in France, but back home, his budget this year eliminated access to health care for 164,000 veterans and reduced VA hospital services some of the guys might need.

It's not only soldiers and veterans. Bush has a way of acknowledging a problem and then doing nothing about it.

I guess the man is Commander-in-Chief, so he makes these appearances so he can feel affinity with his men. Either that or he feels guilty for missing so many National Guard meetings back in the day. That, and they're good photo-ops for the re-election campaign. VVAW has campaigned for better veterans' benefits using the slogan: "Used once and thrown away." Not for Bush. His slogan for us is: "Use them and reuse them." We have voter appeal.

While Bush likes to get himself photographed with soldiers and veterans, there is one photograph or film clip you don't see. Bush is the first war president who hasn't found a way to honor dead soldiers returning from the war. Aside from Memorial Day — which he can't elude — Bush seems to ignore (and hide) the returning body bags. I suppose this is because he doesn't want to call attention to the consequences of this war he started under false pretenses.

From our nation's leaders we don't usually expect a great amount of material support for soldiers, and even less for veterans. But Bush seems to be the worst one yet. Other presidents have screwed us, but they had the decency to be surreptitious and embarrassed about it. Bush seems to be "in your face" and doesn't care as long as Karl Rove or one of his people can keep a lid on it. It's not only soldiers and veterans. Bush has a way of acknowledging a problem and then doing nothing about it. Another example is in education where he came up with the No Child Left Behind program and then provided zero funds for it. George Bernard Shaw must have seen a Bush in the future when he said, "The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of inhumanity."

Bill Shunas is a Vietnam veteran and author. He's a member of VVAW's Chicago chapter.

Notes from the Boonies

Paul Wisovaty

The reader of past "Boonies" columns will recall my confusion, and occasional amazement, in regard to the thinking patterns of my fellow Americans. (Lest I be accused of putting on airs, I readily confess similar bewilderment at many of my own.) In a perfect world, this would be a non-issue. The 21st Century media flood us with information on every possible subject; literate voters process it, and we ought to wind up with near-consensus on everything from gay and lesbian marriage to Iraq. Presidential candidates, and even those poor slugs running for mayor of Tuscola, would be swept into office with 90% of the vote. I'm not the most religious guy in the world, but God did give us brains, didn't He?

Try this. Let's say Junior goes on national TV next week and says the following: "I lied to all you dumb bastards about the WMDs. I never believed for a moment Iraq had any. I sent your sons and daughters over there to die in the sand because I promised Dad I'd get rid of Saddam. But hey! Isn't the world a better place without him?" Were this to happen, I guarantee you that 75% of the people who work in the Douglas County Courthouse would still vote for him. What do we make of this?

I looked all over the house for my graduate degrees in psychology and political science, so that I could explain this to you, but I couldn't find them. (I guess they're kind of like those weapons of mass destruction.) So let's try a more credible approach.

Many readers will be familiar with James Loewen's book, "Lies My Teacher Told Me." There is a chapter in his book about the Vietnam War (who would've guessed?), and Loewen makes some interesting points. Unlike the present writer, he even backs them up with facts. I will not suggest that his findings in regard to Vietnam correlate precisely with our present dilemma in Iraq, and will leave that determination to the discerning reader.

It has long been a staple of American sociology that the Vietnam War was generally opposed by the better-educated among us ... and supported by those poor textbook-challenged drones who could never figure out how to work their way through a GED test. Not so, says Loewen, and he goes on to prove it.

Loewen reports that a 1971 Gallup Poll asked a random sample of Americans whether we should remove all U.S. troops from Vietnam by the end of that year. 73% said yes, and 27% said no. That is not particularly surprising. What is surprising is that "twice as high a proportion of college-educated adults, 40%, were hawks (supported the war), compared to only 20% of adults with grade school educations" who supported the war. Loewen admits that "these results surprise even some professional social scientists."

Professor Loewen goes to some length to explain this phenomenon, and I would encourage the interested reader to consult his book for a much better explanation than I am capable of rendering. With apologies to him for what will surely be an inadequate summary of his findings, please allow me a few short paragraphs to try to do that.

Better-educated, more successful Americans feel vested in this country, and accordingly in the decisions made by its leaders. There is a codependency of sorts at work. America, as a society which allows almost unlimited socioeconomic mobility, rewards its most industrious and virtuous citizens with better-paying jobs and ac-

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My View: On Herosim

JOHN ZUTZ

Since the fall of the twin towers on September 11, it seems that some have been a little free in labeling people "hero." Certainly nobody will deny that police and fire personnel who rushed to help survivors — and ultimately gave their lives in the collapse — deserve the title. However, recently it seems the line drawn between heroism and ordinary everyday actions has been moved significantly toward the mundane.

In classical mythology, a hero was a being of great strength and courage celebrated for bold exploits. He was often the offspring of a mortal and a god. Recent tradition holds heroism to be distinguished by exceptional courage, nobility and strength.

It's a shame to dilute those standards by honoring more pedestrian actions with the designation. Certainly to be considered for the honor a person ought to have performed some action above and beyond normal. Medal of Honor recipients qualify, as do most of those awarded Silver and Bronze Stars or their equivalents.

A young girl caught in an ambush, wounded and held as a POW (apparently without firing her weapon) is certainly a victim of circumstance. But with no action on her part other than surviving, she doesn't qualify — though she was awarded a Silver Star.

On their return many of the troops serving in Iraq will be called heroes. Most of them don't qualify, and shouldn't be included in the category, since the guy next to them performed the same actions.

On occasion those of us who served in Vietnam have been addressed as heroes. Most of us don't qualify, either. The fact that we went, served our country, and survived doesn't raise us to the level of exceptional courage, nobility or strength.

Many of those whose names are on the wall were heroes, though not all. As a survivor I politely decline the honor, and call for higher standards.

JOHN ZUTZ IS A MEMBER OF THE MILWAUKEE CHAPTER AND A VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR.

Notes From the Boonies

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cordant privilege. In their minds, and obviously to their advantage, America is seen as the ultimate meritocracy. And being so justly rewarded, do they not have an accordant obligation to this country? Of course they do, and not being ungrateful slackers, they are only too happy to fulfill it. They do this by serving in capacities which require and allow them to play disproportionately large roles in societal decisionmaking: as CEOs, teachers, politicians, judges, social workers, etc. I suppose the precise sociological terminology for this phenomenon is: "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours."

Well, with all this mutual backscratching going on, it will be understood that neither party wants to be the first to rest its fingers. (I apologize if I'm getting too technical for you.) If I'm pulling in seventy thou a year sitting behind a desk exercising even a minor leadership role in society, why in the world would I want to entertain the notion that the entity which throws all these perks my way might be wrong? 'Cause if Mother Country's wrong, and Mother Country rewarded me, trusted me and, in the process, legitimized me, then is it possible that I'm wrong too? Say it ain't so, Joe Miller, say it ain't so.

Maybe all of this is why, as Loewen points out, better-educated Americans tend to be Republicans. (I know how Republicans would explain that, but we won't go there, will we? To be less-than-painfully honest, I'd like to leave you with a quote from my column in the Spring 2003 ***Veteran***: "I have guys coming into my probation office, with ten years of education and driving a 1984 Ford Fairlane, who say to me, 'What the hell are we doing in Iraq? Saddam never threatened us. Don't we have enough problems in this country to worry about?' If my child molesters and drunks and drug dealers can figure that out, why can't all these Ivy League guys George brings in?" Why not indeed? And as I suggested in the Fall 2002 issue (you can look it up), "Poor people may be poor, but that doesn't necessarily make them stupid. Of course, they're not especially 'vested' either. Perhaps now that the minimum wage has shot all the way up to $5.65 an hour (in progressive Illinois), they can finally put their feet up on their desks, tell their secretaries to bring them some coffee, and start voting Republican."

PAUL WISOVATY IS A MEMBER OF VVAW. HE LIVES IN TUSCOLA, ILLINOIS, WHERE HE WORKS AS A PROBATION OFFICER. HE WAS IN VIETNAM WITH THE US ARMY 9TH DIVISION IN 1968.

VVAW Letter of Support

In recent months, VVAW and its credibility have come under attack from the loony Right and the mainstream press. As with the Nixon administration, these new voices are attacking us on whether or not we are really vets and whether we spoke the truth about the war and our participation in it. Stand with VVAW now. Please sign on to this letter of support and get your friends to do so as well. For over 35 years, Vietnam Veterans Against the War has put itself on the line for veterans and active duty GIs. Now we are putting ourselves on the line for Vietnam Veterans Against the War. This letter will be run as an advertisement in various publications and appear in the next issue of The Veteran. The letter is printed below, along with the list of people who have already signed on. To show your support, please fill out the form below and mail it to the National Office.

Since its formation Vietnam Veterans Against the War has opposed unjust wars and supported the welfare of men and women on active duty. Whenever there has been a choice between the welfare of GIs and the interests of politicians, VVAW has always supported the welfare of fighting men and women.

The testimony of VVAW members in 1971 during the Winter Soldier Investigation first brought to public attention the conditions of service in Vietnam. Members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War worked tirelessly to establish the credentials and accuracy of each witness before the investigation. A confidential Nixon-administration team led by Charles Colson worked ruthlessly to undermine the testimony of each witness afterward. To this day none of the Winter Soldier Investigation evidence has been shown to have been false.

Vietnam Veterans Against the War has continued to focus attention on the many unmet needs of veterans. Members of VVAW developed the rap groups that served as the model for counseling at veterans' outreach centers. Vietnam Veterans Against the War was the first organization to draw attention to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the shameful neglect of patients in VA hospitals, the harmful effect of exposure to Agent Orange, and the inadequacies of educational and employment benefits. VVAW fought for amnesty for war resisters, including vets with bad discharges. VVAW has supported Gulf War veterans in their struggles with Gulf War Syndrome and depleted uranium (DU) ammunition.

The current negative attacks against VVAW are an attack on the whole anti-war movement and must be countered.

Nancy Lessin and Charley Richardson (cofounders, Military Families Speak Out)
Fran Johns (Military Families Speak Out)
Ron Kovic (Vietnam veteran, "Born on the 4th of July")
W.D. Ehrhart, Ph.D. (poet, writer, teacher)
John Ketwig (Vietnam veteran, "And a Hard Rain Fell")
G. David Curry, Ph.D. ("Sunshine Patriots")
Annie Bailey (former regional coordinator, VVAW)
John Lindquist (former national coordinator, VVAW)
Ed Damato (former national coordinator, VVAW)
Dave "Buzz" Doyle (Gulf War I veteran)
Joe Bangert (WSI testifier, DCIII and more)
Orlando Tizon, Ph.D. (Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International (TASSC))*
Sister Alice Zachmann (SSND, TASSC),*
Harold Nelson, Ph.D. (TASSC, World War II veteran)*
Yoomi Jeong (Korea Truth Commission)*
Jeff Stack (Mid-MO Fellowship of Reconciliation coordinator)*
Carl Davidson, (Chicagoans Against War & Injustice, former national secretary of SDS)*
Chukia Lawton (nurse, activist)
Richard Stacewicz, Ph.D. ("Winter Soldiers: Oral History of VVAW")
Jane Fonda (actor, activist)

**for identification only*

Sign me on to the VVAW letter of Support

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Leave No Vet Behind

Ray Parrish

When I hung up the phone after Barry Romo's call to ask me to be the GI counselor in VVAW's revived Military Counseling Service, (773-561-VVAW) I felt like the luckiest man alive. I wasn't surprised to get drafted like this, having done veteran, military and draft counseling in the Seventies, Eighties and Nineties. Then it hit me. The members of VVAW, whom I thought had done more for veterans and their families than any previous group through their work on Agent Orange and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), were confident that I could do the job. They entrusted me with the welfare of their children's generation of GIs and their families. I had always been proud of my previous work and now I realized that those accomplishments had earned me this honor. The joy and pride I felt at that moment is something I will never forget.

Can you imagine the phone conversations among the national coordinators rehearsing how to talk me into taking this job (or, in reality, how to talk my wife, Roni, into allowing me to take it)? I had not yet told anyone, including Roni, that bureaucratic nonsense had recently caused me to quit my job as a mental health caseworker with homeless people and that I was actually looking for work. Destiny? Synchronicity? I took the job without consulting her, but my wife of twenty years somehow finds the patience to endure me. On the one hand, I'm back doing the job that I love. On the other hand, I had to tell my wife that I was losing medical, dental and pension benefits and more than half of my income.

Glad as I am to get "back in the saddle," I feel a responsibility to make sure that we do this right and fulfill the slogan: "Leave No Vet Behind!"

Perhaps some expect me to simply do one-on-one counseling, but I know how porous the government's "safety net" is and I know that this unresolved war will pump out more grief, violence and PTSD than anyone's prepared for and that I will soon be overwhelmed. "Angry young vets" forced the government, and society as a whole, to deal with Agent Orange and PTSD and, as a result, it's now possible to. The resulting medical and mental health advances and legal refinements have given this nation the ability to guarantee every American GI appropriate treatment as soon as they need it! But there's simply not enough money to do this because Congress refuses to make veterans' health care mandatory like Medicare or Social Security and continues to shortchange military health care. Our veterans will continue to suffer in ever-increasing numbers unless non-governmental resources are supported.

VVAW Military Project
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We need to make sure that all of our fellow Americans who volunteer to be trained to kill and are then sent into war to risk their lives can count on being welcomed home with honor and compassion. This is something that most returning veterans will be given by their families and friends and in official ceremonies and programs. But, for a variety of reasons, not all veterans feel welcomed when they return, and not all families awaiting their return feel comfortable just waiting. Support must be given to any effort to reach those who feel abandoned.

Neglected Casualties in the War Against Terrorism

As members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, VVAW, we know that everyone's wartime experiences are unique, but all have been traumatic to some degree. Although most veterans find the help that they need to deal with what they saw and did or what was done to them during the war, some vets don't have the necessary supportive friends or family. Some can't find that help within the military or the VA or have lost all trust in the government that sent them to war. Many have been told to just "deal with it" or face ridicule for voicing their complaints. Some can't even ask and continue to suffer in silence.

VVAW has been dealing with these issues since 1967. Until our generation returned from war, post-traumatic stress disorder hadn't been named. The medical community finally recognized the "battle fatigue" and "shell shock" that afflicted previous veterans as this diagnosable, treatable illness. However, that couldn't be done until they were able to prove that herbicides, such as Agent Orange, were the other half of the initial diagnosis of "Vietnam Syndrome." So, after decades of scientific studies, political pressure, court mandates and legislative ruminations, the government has finally acknowledged "service connection" and pays compensation to these disabled veterans.

These lessons learned as a result of Vietnam have paved the way for payment to earlier mistreated veterans of atomic bomb and chemical weapons testing, although few survived long enough to see a dime. Attorneys are now able to represent some veterans in VA claims (which now have a Federal appeals court). However, the right of GIs to collective bargaining is now outlawed and their free speech and equal protection rights are routinely violated by local commanders. As for "don't ask, don't tell"? Don't ask.

The members of VVAW have accumulated a wealth of knowledge through our personal experiences and our continuing efforts to help our fellow veterans recover from the war and thrive in a society from which some feel excluded. Having survived our own problems, we feel duty-bound to use and pass on these skills so that future generations of "stressed-out" veterans have fewer suicides and wasted lives.

"Help is just a phone call away." While that may have been technically true during the Vietnam War, getting in touch with groups like VVAW was very difficult prior to the Internet and toll-free phone numbers, especially for those overseas. The only people that most GIs could talk to were other GIs and veterans who also had doubts about the war and were as lost as they were. Now we have both the technical means and the knowledge and skills necessary to provide the services that were unavailable to most earlier veterans. Until we see the necessary invasion of U.S. military bases by social workers funded by the military, veterans' groups or the Red Cross, we have to do something, anything, now! That's why VVAW has revived its Military Counseling Service and drafted me.

All it takes is one phone with a sympathetic ear, a calming voice, a patient soul, an open heart and an experienced mind on the other end. Although some questions can't be answered, just being able to ask them is often enough for some callers. Was this war justified? Is it being fought in a "just" manner? How can I lose someone in the war and not be full of anger and hatred? Why did I survive? Do I have a duty to refuse to obey

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Milwaukee Standdown

Bob Riggle

Milwaukee VVAW attempts to assist the Chicago Standdown as much as possible. We also work with the Milwaukee Standdown Coalition. Though Milwaukee doesn't serve the large numbers of veterans that Chicago sees, there is obviously still a need for the service.

The Milwaukee version of the Standdown is shorter, and nowhere near the size of those in Chicago. The format is the same. Feed 'em, bathe 'em, clothe 'em. Provide health and dental care, perhaps a haircut. A judge is available for any legal problems. Assist with an income tax refund. We hope to give them a hand and perhaps even some guidance in their lives.

Milwaukee's biannual events are single days each September and February. VVAW works with the Milwaukee VVA chapter to provide what is known as a hospitality table. Small items like writing tablets, pens, stamps and some toiletries are provided along with other things like paperback books and playing cards.

The Milwaukee Standdown is still held in the National Guard Armory. The local Colonel fought his way up the chain of command throughout the 9-11 paranoia to open his facility and help homeless veterans.

There's a good feeling after these events, especially when we see the numbers of veterans and families who get help. In September '03 over 200 vets came through. In February '04 there were 157. Is this progress? We can only hope.

Bob Riggle is the VVAW Milwaukee contact and a member of VVAW's Milwaukee chapter.

Chicago Homeless Vets Standdown

Meg Miner

My first trip to the Standdown got off to a less-than-promising start. I walked into the kitchen at O'Darkhundred hours and found Barry and Bill (the first of five or six Bills I met that day) pondering the new convection oven the Armory had finally purchased to make cooks' lives easier. Given the option of helping figure this contraption out or cleaning some trays for the hot dogs, I gladly chose a half hour of having my hands in scalding-hot water.

When the pans were ready I popped my head back into the oven room. Speculation about the amount of time it would take to boil five gallons of water — if only we could start now — was floating through the air as the clock ticked steadily towards 8 o'clock.

I seem to recall Barry having to check on something else around this time. At any rate, he disappeared.

Well, being ex-Air Force and a former jet engine mechanic to boot, I figured I could help the Army and offered to look at the instructions. How tough could it really be compared to a tech order for a multimillion-dollar piece of man's achievements over the elements?

Damn all engineers anyhow!

In true troubleshooting tree fashion, Bill #1 and I started going through the steps:

"Is the thing on?"

"Check."

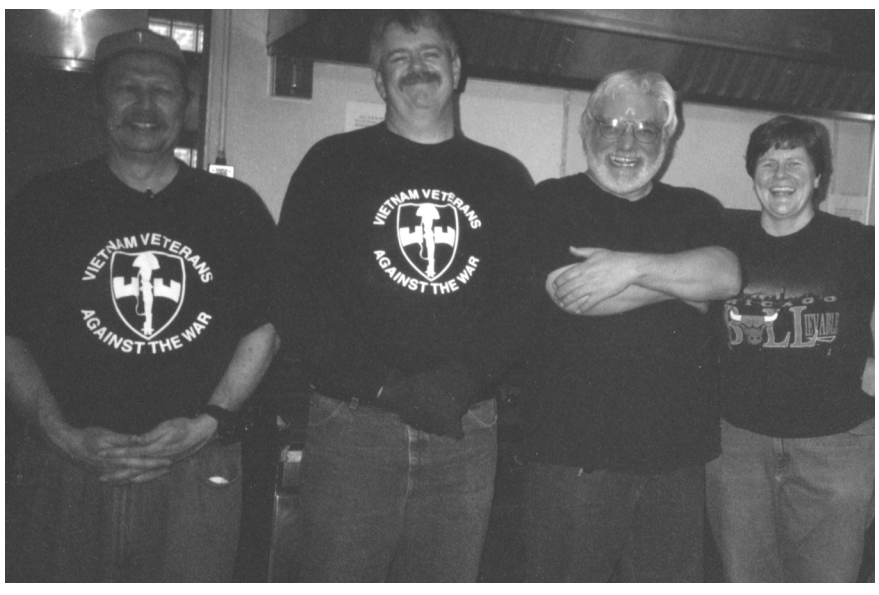
"Does it have gas flow?"

"At the wall, check."

"What about that downstream valve on the machine?"

"Hmm, I seem to recall hearing something about positioning valve handles in the direction of flow."

Aha! We then had a delicate moment deciding how long the igniter had been on and calculating how long it would take to get the



thing warmed up. Our confidence shaken but determined to press on and make this technology ours, we finally placed the first tray of hot dogs in to test the cooking time.

It took a bit longer to get the fan-speed-to-temperature setting ratio tweaked, but once that puppy got going, we had a steady flow of fast-cookin' dogs ready to serve! And they tasted better than the ones that had been boiled to within an inch of their lives, too.

That's how I remember the day. I'd call it a successful joint operation with lessons learned and duly noted for next time — if we can only remember them in six months.

Meg Miner is a librarian in central Illinois and a member of VVAW.

Milwaukee Beer Festival

John Zutz

Over seven hundred people attended the 16th annual Blessing of the Bock, the featured event at the Milwaukee Beer Festival sponsored by Vietnam Veterans Against the War and the Milwaukee Chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA). The fundraising festival sent nearly $7,000 to charity.

The Blessing, performed for the first time by a Lutheran minister, the Rev. Robert Giese, is traditionally a Roman ritual connected to Lent. Bock beers, usually heavier and sweeter than many beer styles, have been brewed since the Middle Ages and are usually "rolled out" as a celebration of Spring.

The festival included 36 display tables manned by the brewers or their representatives, presenting hundreds of beers for thirsty attendees to taste. International and regional beers were served, as well as those of local microbreweries and homebrews.

The main beneficiaries of the festival were the My Lai projects (coordinated by Madison Friends) and the Library of Vietnam project. Money was also given to VVAW, the VVA chapter and a number of other charities.

The Rev. Robert Giese performs the Blessing of the Bock

The Status of My Case

Diedra Cobb

1. I began my conscientious objector (CO) case in early April 2003 with the 203d MI BN, after having tried to begin it for three straight months prior to that time with the 687th QM BN, which was my original unit.

2. I made it clear to my command at the 203d MI BN that I would not fire my weapon nor take the anthrax shot.

3. As a result I was not deployed, but instead my command decided that I was a hazard to the unit and left me stateside in the rear detachment of the unit to do paperwork and finish my conscientious objector case.

4. Throughout my case and time in the rear detachment I received administrative harassment, but was treated rather well by my fellow soldiers.

5. As a result of the harassment, I hired a civilian lawyer from Washington, D.C. who is highly experienced with military law.

6. I spoke against the military and government in New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. whenever I had the opportunity, in addition to helping soldiers on my post that were encountering different forms of harassment.

7. Much of the harassment stopped after I hired the lawyer, but not all of it.

8. For example: I was denied education money; after receiving an approval from the investigative officer in one hearing, it was done again and a disapproval was rendered; after a written agreement was made that I would not have to fire my weapon or take the anthrax shot, they reneged and I was given five days to do so or I would face three very serious charges.

9. I was assaulted (not related to my CO case, I don't believe ...) and pressed charges and filed written testimony with the Criminal Investigation Division (CID).

10. My CO case was denied and I was released to go home.

11. I was told that the man against whom I pressed charges was going to be handled "administratively" (which is a hugely ambiguous generalization to me) and I heard nothing else about what that meant in terms of the outcome of my case.

12. I lost my security clearance, which means that I no longer have a job (or in military wording, I am no longer MOS-qualified) in the military, which means that I cannot be mobilized.

13. I am currently waiting to be contacted by a lawyer who has volunteered to represent me in a writ of *habeas corpus* case, which is a federal appeal to the denial of my conscientious objector case.

14. Due to losing my security clearance and not being qualified to be an intelligence analyst (or 96B) any more, my unit is trying to figure out what to do with me.

15. I am classified as a pending loss in my unit right now and am not required to show up at my unit for weekend drills because I live over 100 miles away.

16. In the meantime, I am volunteering, preparing for school and working to pay off the several thousands of dollars of debt that I have incurred from the expenses of my CO case.

Diedra is a member of VVAW.

Leave No Vet Behind

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certain orders? Why don't people believe me when I talk about what they did to me? Am I a bad person because bad things happen to me? What can I do to feel better about all of the madness that I see in this world, my life and my mind?

Falling Through the Safety Net

"If you see something that needs doing, do it!" When my Vietnam veteran father taught me this value I'm sure he was thinking of my messy room and the overgrown lawn, but it led me to, and kept me in, veterans' counseling since my discharge from active duty. As a nation, we need to accept the responsibility to assure all GIs that we will provide them with any help that they need, even if that means that we, rather than our government, have to do it. Help me get the word out —both to the GIs and those who might be able to help them!

Legal Aid Professionals: I'm asking for volunteers to provide advice and representation to these returned veterans and those still on active duty. The needs include but aren't limited to: help in presenting discharge applications for medical or mental disability, conscientious objection, homosexuality, etc.; fighting discharges based on homosexuality, disobeying illegal orders, false charges etc.; assisting AWOL/deserters returning to military control; representation in courts martial or discharge upgrade applications; and helping victims of abuse or attacks file complaints and find protection.

Medical and Mental Health Professionals: Government doctors can handle most "routine" medical matters, but given this war's environmental dangers, cutting-edge diagnostics and second opinions may be essential. The pace, length, intensity and uncertainty of military deployments is very stressful, especially for an unprepared reservist. In addition to the stress caused by any war, this war's unpopularity is reflected in the dissatisfaction growing within the ranks. There is simply no excuse to allow veterans to commit violence against themselves, family members and the public. Post-traumatic stress disorder can't be allowed to decimate this generation.

I am compiling a confidential national referral list of legal aid, medical and mental health professionals. And they're not all volunteering to just wait for a call. We will encourage them and help them to organize seminars and group counseling for veterans, GIs, their families and support groups at military bases and Guard/Reserve units and at vet centers, churches, colleges or pup-tents that let us in. These volunteers will be able to identify and begin to treat the problems facing GIs and their families. In addition, they can give credible testimony about the gaps in the treatment and compensation "systems." We will then be able to produce timely and credible "evidence" to justify the need for more money, different laws or better programs.

We can't wait for the government to get around to doing this; we have to get it started ourselves. The existing toll-free GI Rights Hotline (800-394-9544), which makes referrals to VVAW, is recruiting and training nonprofessional, volunteer telephone counselors around the country, many of whom may be vets. Everyone could benefit from regular informal meetings: the new and professional volunteers (some may be from the military or VA), veterans, GIs and their families. As always, we start by raising awareness of the problem and then we organize to solve it. Articles in the ***Veteran*** can help you explain the need for this effort to friends or coworkers. Look for local events, demonstrations or seminars to attend and "network" there. If they're not interested, write letters to the editor inviting people to meetings. Use me! I may know someone else in your area or your meeting may be the first of many for your neighbors who feel as lost as you.

Ray Parrish is a member of Chicago's VVAW chapter.

To donate money for VVAW's Military Project, send checks to:
VVAW
PO Box 408594
Chicago, IL 60640
and put "Military Project" in the check memo.

This History's Bunk

KURT HILGENDORF (REVIEWER)

Home to War: A History of the Vietnam Veterans' Movement
By Gerald Nicosia
(Crown, 2001)

Perhaps I could cut Gerald Nicosia some slack.

One would expect that a book of nearly seven hundred pages might have a mistake or two. And it is logical to assume that any author has an underlying motivation and agenda for undertaking a volume of such length. These seem to be reasonable allowances, right?

Well, maybe, if the book did not have a reputation as the final word on Vietnam veterans and their struggle after returning home.

"Home to War" is a narrative labeled as a history of the Vietnam veterans' movement. But, as in any narrative, the story is primary. Nicosia's historical inaccuracy, his liberal critique of radicals' tactics (those of VVAW in particular), and his focus on individual stars make for interesting and occasionally exasperating reading, but the approach does no justice to the history of the veterans' movement. History is, at its core, a method of argumentation and interpretation, and Nicosia is entitled to his own views and conclusions. But after reading "Home to War," I am convinced that a history of the movement would have been better handled by a trained historian than by someone whose major work to date is a biography of Jack Kerouac.

Nicosia's historical inaccuracies in "Home to War" have been publicly addressed in print before. For instance, Michael Uhl notes several examples of the book's incorrect factual evidence in his July 9, 2001 review in the ***Nation*** — specifically, Nicosia's mischaracterization of war crimes hearings and his erroneous description of Uhl's assignment in Vietnam. Uhl was not the only victim of Nicosia's mishandling of historical fact. VVAW national coordinator Barry Romo was said to be in Washington, D.C. at a time when he was in fact three thousand miles away in southern California.

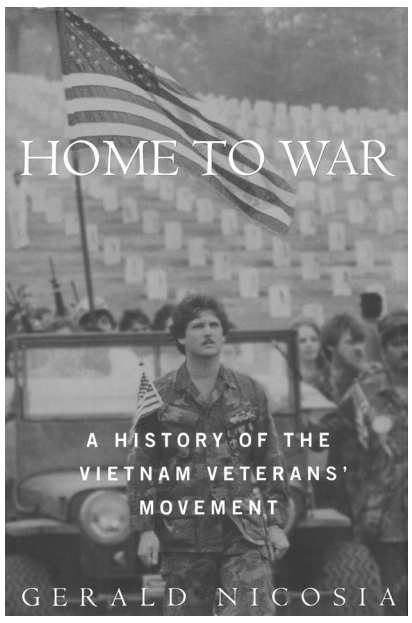
Nicosia's characterization of vets' roles in the anti-war movement, and of VVAW's legacy in particular, is perhaps a more egregious shortcoming than his historical inaccuracy. To his credit, he is evenhanded in describing VVAW's formation and early work, explaining in great detail the organization's growing pains and changes and the struggle of trying to end an unjust war while simultaneously supporting just treatment for that war's veterans. Nicosia also allocates ample space to VVAW's participation in the war moratoria and Operation RAW. His discussion of the Winter Soldier hearings is vivid and lively. In terms of chronology, then, Nicosia's story is sound through 1970.

It is in his version of Dewey Canyon III where Nicosia begins showing his hand. Subtly, yet presaging things to come, Nicosia splits VVAW into two camps: the respectable liberals on one hand, led by John Kerry, and the shifty radicals who, in Nicosia's opinion, present a threat to the uniquely respectable perspective veterans brought to the country's political discourse on the war. DC-III's unplanned events, like the march to the Supreme Court, are written off as thoughtless extremism rather than legitimate statements of anger and outrage. In what is a recurring pattern of highlighting the seemingly-unimportant, Nicosia dedicates nearly equal time to the logistics leading to Kerry's speech before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as he does to the medal return ceremony and its impact on public opinion.

Nicosia's accounts of the 1972 Republican National Convention and the Gainesville Eight trial signify the end for VVAW, at least in his eyes. For Nicosia, VVAW had become too radical by this point to be considered a legitimate organization; all of the organization's decisions were driven by dogmatic ideology rather than by considerations for the movement's success. A case in point happened during a confrontation outside the Fontainebleau Hotel during the 1972 convention. Richard Boyle, a journalist and friend of Ron Kovic, was convinced that the government's offer of allowing several vets in wheelchairs inside in exchange for ending a street blockage would ensure a meeting with President Nixon where they would physically force him to end the war. Boyle (who had no history as a political organizer) is treated as an authority on effective political protest. At the same time, Nicosia chastises VVAW leadership for deciding to stay with the original plan and avoid bowing to a government ploy, because he feels any decision could not possibly have been motivated by anything but communist dictates. Nicosia paints this group-approved decision as a horrible mistake. In Nicosia's analysis, the maverick activities of a few individuals always trump organized political action.

In his coverage of the Gainesville Eight trial, Nicosia essentially makes the case a soap opera; storylines are preferred over historical analysis. Scott Camil, the only person connected with the organization at that time who receives any sympathetic treatment, figures heavily in the action, as do government agents involved in the Gainesville setup and those tied to the Watergate break-in (which Nicosia argues is the real backdrop for the conspiracy trial). On the other hand, little time is dedicated to the organization's work to support the defendants or the long-term effects the trial had on the organization's sustainability. And as soon as he closes this chapter, Nicosia basically writes VVAW out of the history altogether. Any references to the organization are isolated and tangential to the story he is covering at the time; when references are made, they are usually one-offs directed at how he thinks radical political analysis and progressive multi-issue organizing only harmed the veterans' movement.

Even if Nicosia had done a credible job covering VVAW, "Home to War" would still have serious deficiencies as a history of a movement. Movements are not characterized solely by the most visible individuals engaging in work on behalf of a group of people. Movements are made and sustained by those at the bottom doing the day-to-day struggles required to effect change. Yet to read Nicosia's book, one would be led to believe movements are only created and sustained by individuals who have special training or intellect, or by individuals, driven by overwhelming pain and anguish, who lash out in a disorganized and desperate fashion at the first target they can find. Nicosia writes that the Vietnam veterans' movement was really by and for regular people who survived a most brutal war. I agree with his sentiment, but his approach belies his conclusions.



Nicosia's chapter on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is the first case in point. Vets' rap groups were spearheaded by the VVAW chapter in New York and aided by Dr. Chaim Shatan. After the technique's initial successes, more chapters around the country began holding rap groups. From a movement perspective, then, rap groups should have been the focus — regular vets coming together for counseling in a supportive environment. Yet Nicosia spends almost all his energy on the evolution of PTSD as a psychological concept, the discussions and arguments between doctors, and who was at what professional conference when. As a result, a struggle to get a definition into a book appears as the main issue when the real issue was providing treatment for thousands of vets. Logically, if the movement was by and for regular people, why not spend time and space discussing their work?

A second case of privileging individuals over the movement is Nicosia's discussion of the American Veterans' Movement (AVM), a brainchild of Ron Kovic. AVM's vision was to have a second Bonus March on July 4th weekend, 1974; thousands of people would follow Kovic and company to Washington, D.C. to demand better treatment for Vietnam vets. Despite the grandiosity and unlikely success of such an unplanned and disorganized event, Nicosia latches on and gives it ample treatment and light criticism, likely because of its liberal tone and Kovic's involvement. (Nicosia covers just about every Kovic-related action of the 1970s.) AVM barely existed as an organization, yet Nicosia treats it as the great vets' hope for change. That only one small group

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What's the Point of Poetry?

W. D. Ehrhart (Reviewer)

Earth Songs: New & Selected Poems
By Jan Barry
(iUniverse, Inc., 2003)

"I joined the army and went to Vietnam to become a soldier," Jan Barry writes in the preface to "Earth Songs." "Vietnam turned me into a poet and peace activist." In his poem "Peace Time," he adds, "It was all so / easy to go off to war ... . What's been hardest / in life has been to risk / my neck for peace."

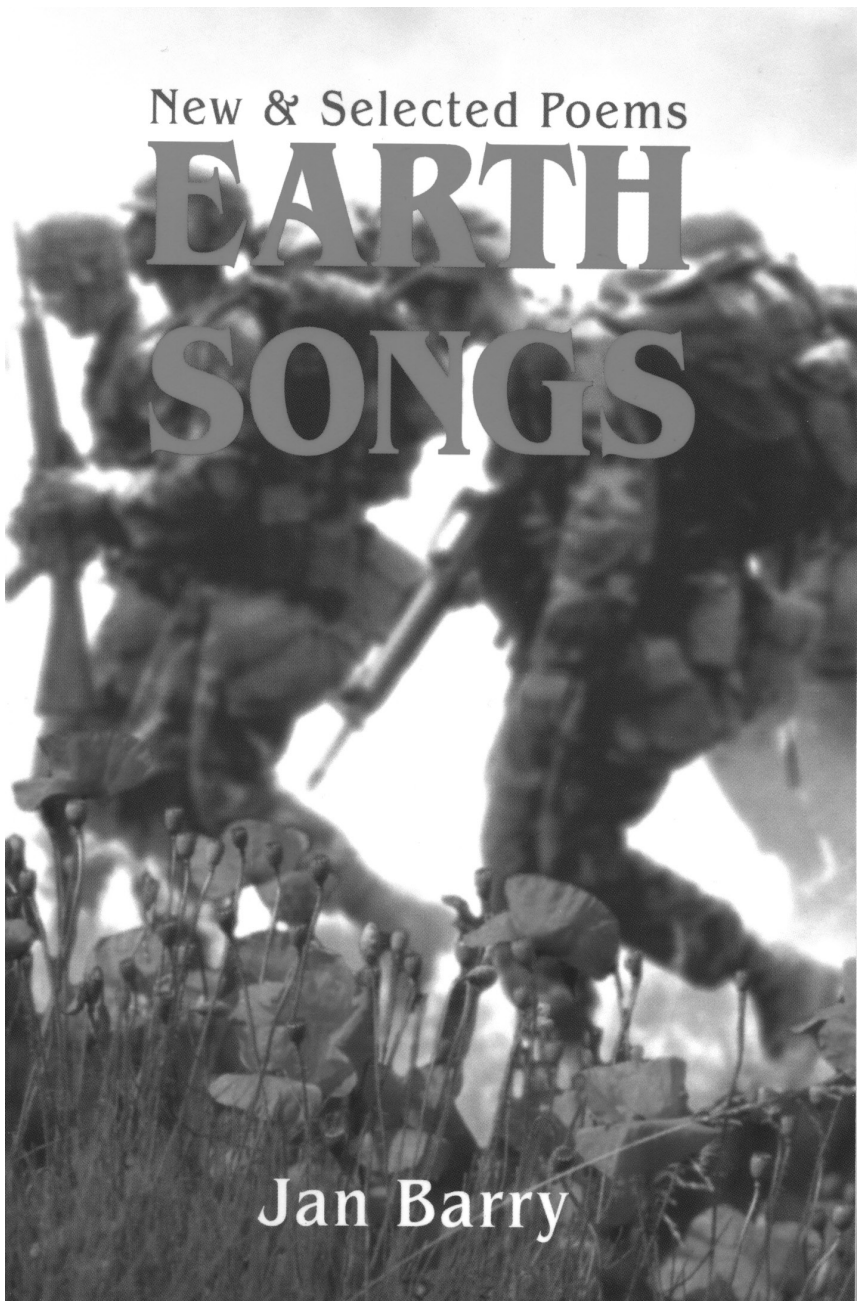
Yet risking his neck for peace is exactly what Barry has been doing for forty years now. A Republican farm boy from upstate New York who'd grown up idolizing his dead uncle killed in the Pacific in 1944, he dropped out of college and joined the army with grand visions of one day becoming "a battle general," as he says in "The Struggle."

Sent to Vietnam in 1962, when the war was still a small and almost casual affair, Barry soon began to understand that Vietnam "was no great crusade, which the generals think they lead" ("Duty"), but rather a heartbreakingly "green land" rapidly being "reduced to smoke" ("Long Before") by American arrogance and stupidity.

Awarded a coveted appointment from the ranks to West Point, Barry could not dismiss what he'd seen and learned in Vietnam. In "Duty, Honor, Country," he writes of the irony of "impeccable cadets [who] will assault villages, / turn rice fields into killing zones / and farmers into corpses," and concludes: "Time to stop soldiering, / turn from weapons / to words—"

Barry resigned his appointment, got out of the army, and set off in search of a different future, one that has included founding Vietnam Veterans Against the War, editing "Winning Hearts and Minds: War Poems by Vietnam Veterans" (one of the most influential and remarkable poetry anthologies ever published), becoming a major force in the 1980s nuclear freeze movement, and authoring books on grassroots organizing, all while simultaneously maintaining a life as a working journalist, husband and father.

But at the heart of his life lies poetry. As he writes in his preface, "I've never made a living from poetry, but poetry is what has gotten me through life. ... Earth Songs is a tribute to the world I discovered beyond battlefields ... a true tale — the hardest there is to tell — of a teenage soldier growing into a world citizen." Though he is far too self-effacing to say so, it is also a tribute to Barry himself, and to the remarkable and admirable life he has lived.



Fans and aficionados of Vietnam War poetry will find many familiar poems of Barry's in "Earth Songs," poems first appearing in "Winning Hearts and Minds" and its companion anthology "Demilitarized Zones: Veterans After Vietnam": "In the Footsteps of Genghis Khan," "Nights in Nha Trang," "Floating Petals," "Thap Ba," "Memorial for Man in Black Pajamas," "The Colonel's Daughter," "Harvest Moon," "The Struggle," and others. But along with these older and more familiar poems are scores of other poems previously available only in very limited-circulation anthologies and limited-edition chapbooks, or published here for the first time. Poems like "Sparrow" and "A Childhood Tale," "Young Soldiers, Old War" and "Saturday Night" add depth and breadth to Barry's experiences as a young soldier in Vietnam. But the war is only the book's starting point, from which Barry journeys forward and backward, weaving a life in poems: his West Point experience, the death of his Uncle Ted in the Battle of Leyte Gulf, discovering New York City, falling in love with the woman who would be his wife for more than thirty years, reading the names of the Vietnam War dead at Riverside Church and marching with VVAW comrades to Valley Forge, a whole section of poems about a trip Barry took to the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War Reagan years.

Barry's experiences as a journalist are reflected directly in poems such as "Choosing the News," in which he writes, "Inside the editors' eyrie, / eyes that never saw a body fall / decide how many words a life was worth / or not worth mentioning at all," and indirectly in poems such as "Bitter Fruit" and "March Madness," poems dealing with AIDS and urban violence respectively. An assortment of elegies for the famous (Allen Ginsberg), the beloved (old VVAWer Sheldon Ramsdell), and the all-but-anonymous (Cindy Villalba) is complemented by Barry's irrepressible optimism in poems like "Down Town" and "Magnolia Morning."

Most moving of all, I think, are Barry's poems to his wife, Paula Kay Pierce, from the early love poem "Paula Kay" to "Us," in which he writes, "After so many battles / we are a pair of ruffled swans / who have survived / a great many storms / together[,]" to "Death in America," where he writes of Paula's losing battle with cancer, "There are no words to express what it's like to watch / your lover and best friend die," to her return to him in dreams: "'Time to get up!' she snaps / in an impatient mood, / rousting me from the dead."

So Barry rousts himself from the dead, from his sorrow and grief, and goes on with his life, acknowledging in "Listen, Death" that "Death will catch me / in due time," but insisting that "until then / the time is mine." "Earth Songs," dedicated "To Paula — for love and life," is proof of that insistence.

And over the years, few voices have been as insistent, as cogent, as compelling, or as thoughtful as Barry's. In "In the Footsteps of Genghis Khan," Barry writes of American soldiers "unencumbered by history in a foreign land." In "Lessons," to his son's question, "What's a patriot, Dad?" Barry replies, "Well, I guess a person / who loves the land. / Although some people act as though / a patriot's a man / who hates another land." In "The Peace Monument," Barry asks, "Where are the statues to those brave souls / Who kept the peace[?]"

Such questions and observations are surely as relevant today — as vital — as when they were written ten, twenty, and thirty years ago. Likewise for one of Barry's newest poems, "What's the Point": "What's the point of poetry? / Might's well ask what's the point of spring, / what's the point of a flower opening."

If you don't already own this book, do something about it now. Order Jan Barry's "Earth Songs: New & Selected Poems" online from: www.janbarry.net, www.iuniverse.com, or www.amazon.com.

W. D. Ehrhart is an author, poet and teacher and a member of VVAW.

In a Fog: Robert McNamara and the Rhetoric of Repentance

Edith Shillue (Reviewer)

Erroll Morris' documentary The Fog of War is a good and important film, but not for any of the reasons that brought it acclaim. Excellent camera work, effective use of archive material and a willing, open subject make for a telling portrait of the ideology that fuels US militarism. In talking so openly about his life and times, McNamara doesn't really shed any new light on US policy, but rather unwittingly proves a range of leftist theories about networks of elite men generating chaos in corners of the world. The blurbs and mainstream hype around the film return to Morris' questioning regularly and credit him with pushing McNamara into "compelling territory," but in fact, Morris has little influence in steering the conversation. Apart from a therapeutic comment — "We're going to have to approach Viet Nam at some point" — he can't really control McNamara in his didactic approach to autobiography. Fortunately, he doesn't really try, and, perhaps realizing who he is dealing with, just lets things roll.

McNamara's autobiography is the spine of the film, supported in places by what Morris has posited as 'Eleven Lessons.' The lessons are phrases that appear glib when held up against the events within which they're contained; comments such as "empathize with your enemy" in the context of the Cuban Missile Crisis (where it deterred conflict) and the Viet Nam war (where its absence inflamed conflict).

Every historic event of the 20th century, of which McNamara was apparently an important part, is a necessary lesson in the two-sided nature of meaning well. As he runs through his resume, with a grating Ivy League jocularity we become keenly aware of the infrastructure of American militarism, with its network of brainy decision-makers, corporate contracting and military hawks. His description of his work in World War II proves Chomsky's Viet Nam era dissent on the complicity between US war makers and elite educational institutions. And as Morris brilliantly superimposes the names of US cities over Japanese death tolls, McNamara talks about the firebombing of Tokyo as a result of research into "military effectiveness." The sequence ends, perhaps chillingly to some, with him admitting culpability as a war criminal. It might arouse sympathy if it doesn't occur to you that we all know full well he'll remain immune from such charges.

The more McNamra talks, the more he is a portrait of the armchair general — knowing and wise in the ways of the battlefield and solemn about the lessons learned. All the while, "war" is some mysterious and compelling problem, like a piece of complex mathematics to which no one has found an answer.

Though he "approaches" Viet Nam and US policy in the 1960s slowly, Morris uses taped conversations between LBJ and McNamara to great effect. And while McNamara talks in such a way that insists he wanted withdrawal, not expansion, the blind allegiance to doing the right thing and maintaining military authority leave us dumbstruck. Any debate on whether contemporary policy in Iraq is "another Viet Nam" is quickly settled listening to LBJ's Texas drawl; we hear Bush on freedom and security and, seeing Morris' shots of McNamara's 1965 analysis, the word "Terrorism" surfaces on the page like detritus thrown from an explosion. The Gulf of Tonkin incident is clearly exposed as a fake by Morris (with archival tapes) but McNamara dodges the criminality of escalation with a rhetorical oddity: "Belief and seeing are both often wrong."

On nearly every major matter from the era, McNamara dodges with a combination of rhetoric and mea culpa. The toxicity of Agent Orange was completely unknown to him and he would never have knowingly authorized it; he was always pushing for withdrawal, going so far as to confront the President; on the matter of responding to public protest with the military, he claims 'the guns weren't loaded. And I was never going to order them to be" (apparently this information never made it to Ohio.) In one moment of grand delusion, he seems to equate his own conscience with that of Norman Morrison. All of these things add up to a portrait of the infrastructure of empire, though McNamara seems simply to be giving an insider's account of difficult decision-making. At the start one is overwhelmed by his smug didacticism; after two hours he's an eighty-five year old man soaked in regret, attempting penance. As the film ends, with a note that in 1967 McNamara moved from the Pentagon to the World Bank, we might consider the noblesse oblige of twentieth century development and contemporary global inequities. The lesson being that history doesn't repeat itself — ideology repeats itself; history follows.

This is a good film, particularly for the university classroom. But it is not a simple lesson in 'war is bad' rhetoric — though it is being hailed as such. It is a chilling portrait of a delusional elite who, when asked if he were "author or instrument," stated, "I was doing my duty."

Edith Shillue teaches English at the University of Massachusetts/ Boston. She is the author of Earth and Water: Encounters in Viet Nam (University of Massachusetts Press).

This History's Bunk

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of people made it to the Bonus March is of little consequence. In contrast, he paints VVAW's action, organized and actually executed, as disastrous. Not only did he get the figure wrong (2000 as opposed to 4000 in attendance), but he also criticizes the event's demands as "political and partisan" and impugns the event's legitimacy because "there had been no preparatory congressional lobbying and no eloquent, dignified John Kerry spellbinding the entire Foreign Relations Committee." Evidently, only apolitical, Nicosia-approved actions are reasonable methods of influencing public policy.

For the purposes of this review, the final instance of Nicosia's emphasizing of individuals over the movement occurs in his account of the Agent Orange settlement. VVAW, especially the Milwaukee and Madison chapters, was at the forefront of the movement to get treatment and financial compensation for Agent Orange-related disorders. But Nicosia eschews an account of actual organizing in favor of a legal drama in which individual players are made into larger-than-life figures. People around the country were organizing, raising money, and protesting both the VA and chemical manufacturers. But in Nicosia's account, all of the attention is focused on the lawsuit. Victor Yannaconne, the plaintiff's lead attorney, is the central character. Nicosia spends more time on Yannaconne's ego and his battles with other attorneys than on Maude DeVictor, the Chicago VA nurse responsible for making public the effects of Agent Orange. And while his discussion of the enormous threat to liability law the case posed is indeed fascinating, it has little to do with the Vietnam veterans' movement.

Writers of history are given a special free pass of legitimacy when it comes to injecting their perspectives into issues — perhaps deservedly so, as writing a book is a serious undertaking. But writing "Home to War" does not automatically make Nicosia an authority on

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Stolen Valor —Stolen Legacy

DAVE CURRY (REVIEWER)

Stolen Valor: How the Vietnam Generation Was Robbed of Its Heroes and Its History
B.G. Burkett & Glenna Whitley (Verity Press, 1998)

B.G. Burkett's stated goal is to steal back the valor of the Vietnam veterans who really served in Vietnam. To do so, he seeks to destroy the "myth" perpetuated by Vietnam veteran "liars and wannabes" with the assistance of the media, the Department of Veterans Affairs, veterans' advocates, and the mental health care industry. In order to accomplish his goal, Burkett and his coauthor set out to steal the legacy of being Vietnam veterans from all Vietnam veterans who opposed the Vietnam War and all Vietnam veterans who suffer or have suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, homelessness, suicide, service-connected substance abuse problems, or health problems related to Agent Orange.

Burkett does not claim to be a social scientist, nor should he be mistaken for one. His "research" might be passed off for poor journalism, but no more. His central research technique is leafing through the military records of other veterans that are made available through the federal Freedom of Information Act. There are a number of problems with this approach — chief among them the notorious inaccuracy and incompleteness of military records. For Burkett, if there's no military record available through Freedom of Information, there's no veteran. There is no evidence that Burkett ever attempts to expand his research by soliciting interview information from the victims of his attacks. He does cite opinions of "successful" veterans and authors who agree with his particular prejudices, but even that is done selectively.

The errors in research methodology in "Stolen Valor" could fill a volume as large as Burkett's. I will draw attention to only some of the more glaring tendencies in his work. In his chapter entitled "The Minority Myth: Blacks in Vietnam," Burkett denigrates the service and sacrifice of African-American soldiers in Vietnam. There is empirical research on variations in casualties and service between African-Americans and whites in Vietnam, but Burkett doesn't address it. Instead, Burkett's main target is Wallace Terry's *Bloods*. In this chapter as in others, Burkett eschews direct attacks on his target, instead concentrating on a TV documentary and a movie, both of which were loosely based on Terry's book. Burkett finishes the chapter with some interviews of successful African-American Vietnam veterans and concludes that Vietnam provided African-Americans an opportunity to display "leadership skills."

Burkett does not claim to be a social scientist, nor should he be mistaken for one. His "research" might be passed off for poor journalism, but no more.

Burkett's attack on the Winter Soldier Investigation follows the same pattern. He relies on a Neil Sheehan review of Mark Lane's "Conversations with Americans" and simply repeats charges of Sheehan on selected Lane interviewees. (Mark Lane subsequently substantiated the veracity of his interviewees, but that isn't mentioned by Burkett.) With real enthusiasm (similar to that shown in other sections of the book devoted to African-Americans), Burkett provides a detailed account of the exposure of Al Hubbard of Vietnam Veterans Against the War for lying about his military rank. Burkett points out that Hubbard authored a poem that was published as an introduction to the testimonies given at the Winter Soldier Investigation. Burkett does not note that Al Hubbard did not testify in the Winter Soldier Investigation. The only other member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War that Burkett specifically accuses of false statements about his military records is Michael Harbert. Like Hubbard, Harbert did not testify at the Winter Soldier Investigation. Based on only these two cases, Burkett concludes that the Winter Soldier Investigation was a "tribunal" affected by non-veterans giving false testimony. He does so without impugning the veracity of even one veteran who actually testified at the Winter Soldier Investigation.

That any veteran of Vietnam could oppose the war is an obsession of Burkett that he will not concede. He continually levels *ad hominem* attacks on every Vietnam Veteran Against the War whose military record he can't attack. Jan Barry (p. 559) was in Vietnam so early in the conflict that: "His biggest moral dilemma may have been whether to have his eggs scrambled or fried each morning." How could John Kerry (p. 135) have opposed the war when he was "a Kennedy protégé with white hot political aspirations." The late Lynda Van Devanter (p. 973) abused drugs and alcohol and represented Vietnam Army nurses as "lesbians and whores." Bobby Muller (p. 560) and Ron Kovic only turned against the war because they were paralyzed by combat wounds. Burkett's attack on Kovic is one the most bizarre attempts at rationalization that I have ever read. According to Burkett, Kovic was a gung-ho Marine who volunteered for Vietnam. In Burkett's words (p. 396), "For Kovic to pretend that he was victimized by the American government is an outrage." Burkett (p. 399) quotes Kovic's citation for the Bronze Star: Kovic was shot, resulting in a paralyzing wound, while attempting to assist a wounded comrade. For Burkett, this demonstrated that Kovic could not have opposed the war prior to his wound. Burkett's simplistic reduction of another vet's courage is the outrage here.

Whatever you do, don't BUY this book. Burkett wants to recover his stolen valor by stealing the valor of thousands of other Vietnam veterans. Burkett does have, however, one big fan. Last year President George W. Bush pinned the Army Decoration of Distinguished Civilian Service on Burkett's chest. Since Burkett's ability at researching military records is so good, I'm surprised that he hasn't been able to find his president's missing military records.

DAVE CURRY IS A MEMBER OF THE VVAW NATIONAL OFFICE STAFF.

This History's Bunk

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the intricacies of social change. Throughout the text, he positions himself as the voice of reason in opposition to the frequently chaotic and conflicted voices of the nation's Vietnam veterans; his tone often paternalistic, Nicosia writes from the position of an "enlightened observer" who is smarter than those he details. He concludes: "The whole Vietnam veterans' movement was a kind of high bluffing in the face of history. And it proved, once and for all, that history is made by individuals who can convince the world they have more power than they actually do."

But, as a close read of the book reveals, the enlightened observer could learn from his subjects. Vietnam veterans did not earn their victories through a mythical, illusory power. Their victories were not accidental. Their power was real. It is still real. It's the reason George W. Bush has to defend his fake Vietnam-era service. Vietnam veterans have power because they experienced firsthand the implications of pointless atrocities. They have power because they spoke out against those atrocities and for the cause of justice. And they have power because their legitimacy results from these real experiences, not just a book contract.

KURT HILGENDORF, A UNIVERSITY HONORS GRADUATE FROM THE COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, IS CURRENTLY A TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENT IN THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT AT ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY. HE IS A MEMBER OF THE CHAMPAIGN-URBANA CHAPTER OF VVAW.

Proof That a Draft is Being Readied for 2005?

Rick Jahnkow

From the March-April 2004 issue of Draft NOtices, published by Committee Opposed to Militarism and the Draft (www.comdsd.org)

Stories have been flying around the Internet warning us that the machinery for a draft is being "oiled" and will be used within a year. They include statements like the following:

"The Selective Service System has lain basically dormant for decades and now in the 2004 budget, Bush has added $28 million to get the whole thing ready to fly in 2005."

"The Pentagon has quietly begun a public campaign to fill all 10,350 draft board positions and 11,070 appeals board slots nationwide."

"$28 Million to get DRAFT READY BY JUNE 15, 2005!!"

"This website will provide absolute proof that Bush is making plans to reinstate the draft by the middle of 2005."

COMD is receiving copies of these articles or alerts every week, and we've spent a lot of time answering questions about whether or not they are true. Unfortunately, much of the information in them is inaccurate or untrue; and while there are reasons for people to be concerned about the possibility of a future draft, the current hysteria caused by these rumors is diverting attention from other immediate issues that could, in fact, increase the chances of a draft later if they aren't addressed more vigorously now.

One of the "proofs" cited for an impending draft is the fact that a notice was posted on a federal web site soliciting volunteers to serve on draft boards. One writer for Salon.com mentioned this in his article a few months ago, and it was soon being repeated by other writers on the Net. Some stories have quoted Ned Lebow, a Dartmouth College professor who once taught at the National War College in Washington. Lebow has claimed, "This is significant. . . . What the Department of Defense is doing is creating the infrastructure to make the draft a viable option should the administration wish to go this route." According to one article, Lebow said it is the first public call to reconstitute draft boards since the compulsory draft was abolished in 1973.

But, in fact, the Selective Service System has been recruiting and training draft board members since the early 1980s, when Congress authorized funds to place SSS in a state of standby readiness. Congress must still authorize inductions before a draft can begin, but SSS has essentially been readying itself for the last 24 years.

Another item that is being cited as "proof" that SSS is about to begin drafting people is the SSS Annual Performance Plan, Fiscal Year 2004. This plan, presented to Congress in 2003, is basically the agency's annual justification for continued funding. It states various numerical goals for performance and cites specific amounts of money needed to reach those goals. The 2004 plan is similar to previous ones and describes activities that are merely extensions of the ongoing work SSS has done since 1980. A budget request for $28 million was slightly more than previous budgets, but there is nothing in the FY 2004 plan that is significantly different from other recent years.

Someone who misread the 2004 plan distributed an Internet alert declaring that Bush had requested a $28 million "increase" in SSS's budget and that the plan was a blueprint to begin drafting after March 31, 2005. In reality, SSS only got a total of $26.1 million for 2004, and the March date was merely a normal deadline for SSS to report on whether it had reached its annual performance plan goals. If such planning were really an indication of an impending draft, then we would have already had one for two decades.

Another piece of evidence mentioned as "proof" that a draft is imminent is two companion bills in Congress, S. 89 and H.R. 163, which would require men and women to either do mandatory civilian or military service. But this legislation was introduced in January 2003 and has gone nowhere in Congress. It's not likely to, either, because of features that make it impractical overall, especially for the military.

One of the organizations that has been spreading misinformation about the draft on the Internet calls itself the "Democratic Underground," a left-leaning group that isn't officially part of the Democratic Party but urges people to vote for Democratic Party candidates. The DU's interest in spreading fear of an impending draft is boldly revealed when they declare: "VOTE FOR BUSH IN 2004, BE DRAFTED IN 2005!!" The irony is that the current legislation to bring back the draft in Congress is being spearheaded by Democrats in both the House and Senate, and it is Republicans, including the Bush administration, who are saying they oppose a draft. Furthermore, Democratic presidents in the past have shown plenty of willingness to rely on the draft as a source of cannon fodder for their own wars.

There are actually good reasons to be concerned about what might happen in the coming years if military recruiting becomes less successful and/or the Bush administration further expands U.S. military intervention abroad, and it is important that individuals and organizations work to forestall a future draft by communicating with Congress on the issue now. Some groups in Washington, DC, are even planning a national effort in May that would focus on lobbying against draft legislation, and COMD urges people to participate (for details, contact the Center on Conscience and War, www.nisbco.org, 212-483-2220).

However, a more immediate issue is the fact that many youths — male and female — are already being pressured into entering the military by a poverty draft, and the military is deepening its involvement in K-12 schools — through recruiting and curriculum-based indoctrination programs like JROTC — in order to get more young people accustomed to militarization. This rapidly expanding effort by the Pentagon to influence younger generations will make it more feasible one day to bring back the draft, and a failure to increase the amount of attention focused on this particular problem could make all of the hyperbole about an impending draft a self-fulfilling prophesy.

To help bring more attention to this problem, various local and national organizations have come together to form the National Network Opposing the Militarization of Youth (NNOMY). It is an effort to bring together grassroots activists and groups that have recognized the danger posed by the growing intrusion of the military in young people's lives. COMD urges activists to get in touch with the groups in this network, which can be reached at www.youthandthemilitary.org, or via the AFSC Youth and Militarism office, 215-241-7176.

Finally, we encourage people to get a copy of COMD's flier, "What You Can Do," which is written for young people, parents and others who are concerned about the possibility of a draft. Write to us or download it at our Web site, www.comdsd.org.

Chicago's Finest - March 20, 2004

Rick Jahnkow is a member of Committee Opposed to Militarism and the Draft.

Action Alert: Zero Tolerance for Torture

NO, to the torture of Iraqi detainees and U.S. government secrecy.

YES, to the release of government documents and open hearings.

Recent reports in the media have confirmed that "sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses" (*Taguba Report*) have been committed against Iraqi detainees by U.S. personnel. Although these abuses have been known to various U.S. officials for some time, it was only after the publication of photos on television that the president and others responded with suitable outrage.

Promises are being made, investigations are being announced and congressional closed-door hearings are being held. Yet what we know today is, for the most part, the result of information leaked to the media. We are not being given the right to judge for ourselves what, in fact, has been going on in Iraqi prisons, who has been doing what and who, ultimately, is responsible.

Therefore, TASSC calls on the United States government:

* To ensure the protection of all its detainees from any form of torture or ill-treatment.
* To release all documents in its possession related to the abuse of Iraqi detainees. If the president is serious about presenting the United States to the world as a free, open and just society, his first act will be the release of the report of Major General Antonio Taguba. The president should also agree that all subsequent reports of investigations will be made public upon their completion.
* TASSC calls on Congress to pledge that all hearings on this subject will be open to the public.

These actions would suggest that the U.S. government might indeed be serious about confronting torture committed under its auspices. Hopefully, they would also serve as a precedent for releasing documents dealing with the government's past involvement in human rights abuses.

TAKE ACTION

1. Please contact your representative and your senators and urge them to insist on public disclosure of all documents related to the abuse of Iraqi prisoners. We, the people of the United States, do not need more rhetoric from our leaders; we need the facts so that we may judge for ourselves.

U.S. Capitol Switchboard:
(202) 224-3121

2. Call the White House Comment Line: (202) 456-1111. The president's email address is: **president@whitehouse.gov**.

Note: We would appreciate if you would let us know what you are told. Please contact Harold Nelson with your information: ***harold@tassc.org***

Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International (TASSC)
2141 Harewood Road NE,
Suite B,
Washington, DC 20017
Tel: (202) 529-2991
Fax: (202) 529-8334
Email: **info@tassc.org**
http://www.tassc.org

From Frontline to Homefront

Ron Betts (Reviewer)

They Marched into Sunlight: War and Peace Vietnam and America October 1967
By David Maraniss
(Simon & Schuster, 2003)

Pulitzer Prize-winning author David Maraniss has written the definitive historical account of the travails of many members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. "They Marched into Sunlight" is a description of two battles: one fought in Vietnam and another engaged by anti-war campus activists at the University of Wisconsin, both occurred on the same day in October 1967.

During a few autumn days in 1967, Lt. Col. Terry Allen, Jr., the battalion commander of the 2nd/28th Infantry Regiment — "Black Lions" — of the 1st Infantry Division ("The Big Red One"), sent two depleted infantry companies into battle against the VC 1st Regiment, which was waylaid in the area in a desperate search for rice. The vivid description of the ensuing battle highlighted the bravery and dedication of the soldiers of the 2nd/28th, but it also demonstrated the FUBAR nature of the division level command and control decisions that were made despite the on-the-ground advice from the combat-engaged company and battalion officers and NCOs.

Simultaneously, a few hundred students at the University of Wisconsin at Madison were determined to oppose the recruitment of students by the Dow Chemical Corporation because of its production of napalm for the Department of Defense. Their plan was simply to demonstrate for a day and then to actively obstruct the Dow recruitment during the following day. When the Madison Police Department was called in to quell the "disturbance," everything went FUBAR on the homefront as well: riot clubs were indiscriminately wielded and CN gas was liberally dispensed among all of the participants, including the police officers — none of whom had ever experienced tear gas deployment, even those few who had some minimal training in crowd control.

Meanwhile, the Johnson administration is depicted in the book as unable to achieve any consensus about how to either proceed or withdraw from what had become the sucking chest wound of their military involvement in South Vietnam and their bombing campaign over North Vietnam and Laos.

David Moraniss weaves several historic and highly personal stories into a fabric that is essentially a microcosm of what many members of VVAW went through, both when we were in-country and then later when we hit the streets all across America to protest against the same war we had fought in. In "They Marched into Sunlight," years of contradictions about fighting a war and then opposing it are summed up in a well-documented book about a single October day in 1967.

Ron Betts, US56410356; CIB, BSM, ACM "V" (CCO, 2ND/18TH INF, 1ST INF DIV, RVN 11/66-11/67) AND A CONTACT FOR VVAW.

VVAW action outside of C.R.E.E.P. offices - New York City, 1972

VVAW On The Move

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U.S. foreign policy. The "Radical Cheerleaders" gave a rousing performance, adding a lighter touch to the generally somber proceedings. Much emphasis was given to the now widely-recognized misrepresentations of the Iraqi WMD threat by the Bush administration.

On the way back to the parking area, the four VVAW members officially in attendance — Don and Ray Wood, Terry Leichner and myself — decided that we now had enough active members to begin having periodic local meetings. The goal is greater organization and greater visibility within the

Portland, Oregon - March 20, 2004

community as opponents to the administration's counterproductive and inappropriate foreign policy. At future rallies, we plan to wear our old uniforms and carry a VVAW banner. By doing so, we will demonstrate solidarity with our active-duty brethren, and showing our status as former warriors will add credibility to our voice for peace.

Rockford, Illinois
Stanley Campbell
VVAW

Rockford Peace & Justice Action Committee's International Day of Protest started well, with wonderful songs, a poem by Christopher Sims, and prayers and speeches. (I gave a speech about how veterans who oppose war should be supported, and a friend immediately invited me out to lunch this week, saying, "Is that what you meant?") Over 75 people rallied at the church, and when we stepped off for the march, there were 83.

Five veterans for peace led the walk to State and Alpine, joined by a lively drumming section. (I think they were members of the local Bread Not Bombs, and they kept up a supportive beat the whole day).

We had two interlopers from Right to Life, but they were not disruptive and almost fit in, except one had a bullhorn and harangued us from across the street.

The three local TV stations covered us.

Afterwards we invited folks back for soup, salad and desserts, which were gobbled up while David Stocker serenaded us. At least

New York City - March 20, 2004

Ann Arbor, Michigan - March 20, 2004

18 people signed up for the mailing list, two of which were vets, one a Vietnam vet from 1970-71 — my era! We were very happy to have attracted new folks.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Dave Kettenhofen
VVAW

The Milwaukee day was sunny and warm with a brisk northwest wind. Whatever the sun gave for heat, the howling wind stole away. The demonstration began at noon and featured musicians, poets and speakers.

Close to twenty Milwaukee VVAW members took part in the demo here. Total participants have been estimated at between 800 and 1200. A couple of dozen pro-Bushies had a counterdemo across the street but left after a short time. There were speeches and a march to the Federal Building.

Our display was to be a ninety-foot diameter peace symbol made of American flags. Each flag had a sticker attached with the name, hometown, age, unit and date of death for each U.S. soldier killed in Iraq.

Near the end of the program, VVAW national officer John Zutz spoke. He entreated the crowd to remember those servicemembers who had died. He reminded the protesters that 58,000 died over ten years in Vietnam, and that over 570 had died in one year of Iraq, and that both wars were based on lies.

He also informed the group that some of our leaders would have them believe that 570 is an insignificant number. He then told the group he was only allowed two minutes to speak, and offered to call for a minute of silence for the dead. He remarked that if they were to observe a minute of silence for each of our dead the group would be standing quietly for over nine and a half hours. (And of course that wouldn't include "coalition" troops or Iraqis.)

After this moment of silence, Zutz invited all demonstration participants, especially veterans, to participate in the installation of 575 flags to give a visual display of what this number looks like.

Three television stations showed up to film the project and interviewed both of us. There was a very positive response from passersby during the afternoon.

Champaign-Urbana, Illinois
Meg Miner
VVAW

The Champaign-Urbana community held a rally/walk for peace on March 20. The event began at the Urbana Middle School gymnasium with a talk by a local Iraqi businessman who had recently visited his family in Iraq. Some community folks read poems and sang songs. The event concluded with a candlelight remembrance of all who have died in Iraq in the last year, followed by a walk up to the courthouse about 6 blocks away. I spoke at the courthouse with two other people, and local folk singers performed.

March 20, 2004

Meg Miner, Champaign-Urbana, Illinois - March 20, 2004

Chicago, Illinois
Brooke Anderson
VVAW

Barry Romo spoke at an earlier faith and peace church event in downtown Chicago that was very crowded. He shared his time with a young mother who had two sons in the military, one a 19-year-old Marine in Asia and one in the 1st Armored in Iraq, age 20. Fighting back tears, she told how her oldest son had contacted her after their first ambush. How, when he came home on R&R, he stood at the door with sand and blood on his fatigues, 15 pounds lighter. She told the crowd that no mother should have to send their child back to war.

At the rally point before the big march, VVAW's Bill Davis spoke and kicked ass. A group from Champaign-Urbana traveled up to Chicago and joined with the VVAW contingent in this two-mile march of four to five thousand protestors.

There were all kinds of anti-war groups, including Chicago neighborhood groups, Palestinian solidarity networks, and lots of just everyday people. The craziest part is that there were so many police. It seemed like there was probably one police officer for every protester. They were mostly Chicago PD, but there were also some County officers. During parts of the march they were shoulder to shoulder along the edge almost as far as you could see, and in some parts three or four deep along the side, with multiple helicopters in the air and police everywhere filming all the participants. The police had on full riot gear: helmets, visors, shields, full body armor including boots and gloves, shields, nightsticks, all kinds of weapons. They seemed better-outfitted than the troops in Iraq.

During the rally at the end of the march, it was almost impossible to hear the speakers clearly.

Afterward, a small group went back to Barry's place to hang out for a while. A Marine vet, only recently back from Iraq and with two weeks to go, came back with us.

Eureka, California
Brian Willson
VVAW

In Eureka, California, Humboldt County, 280 miles north of San Francisco along the Pacific coast, over 4,000 marched one and a half miles through city streets on a warm, beautiful sunny day.

Proclamations from the County Board of Supervisors and the Eureka City Council supported the march. About 50 members of northern California indigenous tribes, along with more than 60 members of VFP (from Garberville Chapter 22 and Humboldt Bay Chapter 56), led the march. It ended at a concluding rally at the Gazebo in Old Town Eureka. The rally featured two hours of speakers, theater and music, the sound system completely powered by eight stationary bicyclists generating electricity along with a solar module.

Fayetteville, North Carolina
Douglas Nelson
VVAW

A half dozen or more of the 1200 participants in the Fayetteville/Fort Bragg action were VVAW members, including two of us who wore VVAW T-shirts. We have marched before and we will march again!

Lansing, Michigan
Arny Steiber
VVAW

The good folks from Lansing put together a great march to the Capitol featuring speakers, music and workshops.

I was introduced as representing both VVAW ("the first veterans' group to oppose war") and Vets For Peace. I was the only veteran on the program and led the group in cadence on the Capitol steps. I don't have the raspy voice of Dave Cline, but the crowd loved it. I added a few verses covering schools, the national debt, Gulf I vets, and Spain.

After that there were a variety of workshops. I showed Country Joe's "Vietnam Experience" video. Moved a lot of people. The combination of music and images can be very powerful. A person from the Michigan Peace Team covered Iraq. We then discussed the similarities of Iraq and Vietnam, and the effects on the troops, their families, and the country.

Farmington, New Mexico
Joseph Knight
VVAW

About 25 peaceniks showed up for a two-hour rally in Farmington. There were only two VVAW members in attendance, but that was enough to hold our banner. It was a sunny spring day in the 70s, nice beat on a tom-tom, good vibes — and we only got flipped off a few times.

Chicago, Illinois - March 20. 2004

Being Part of the Journey

JOHN LINDQUIST

I was at Dewey Canyon in Vietnam, in the 3rd Marine Division in 1969. In April 1971 I was in Dewey Canyon III in Washington, D.C. This was my first VVAW demo and the first time I met John Kerry.

Seventeen of us drove in from Milwaukee to arrive at Potomac Park at about 6:30 in the morning. We were in time for the march to Arlington National Cemetery and back to the steps of the United States Capitol.

Once we voted to occupy the Mall, we saw a lot of the National Office on stage and at the various demos. The speech John Kerry gave in front of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was great. I was already committed to VVAW's ideas, but John's speech moved me like nothing else I ever heard.

Ann Bailey and I went to two National meetings that year, in St. Louis and Kansas City. When John Kerry decided not to run again for the National Office I considered it a loss, but his reasoning was sound; he was going to run for public office. Annie tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Watch: some day he will run for president." I told her no way. Well, I was wrong.

Throughout the years we supported his various campaigns, and I am excited that he is running for president. We need a combat veteran in the White House. I got active, joined Veterans for Kerry and started carrying my "New Soldier" book around. The young kids were fascinated by it.

I do know we need to beat George W. Bush, and we veterans need one of our own in the White House.

I wanted to see him again and finally got the chance during the Wisconsin campaign. After the Wisconsin debates, he came to an Irish bar to thank people who worked on his campaign. I called Buzz Noyes, who was also at DCIII, and said: let's go. I put on my boonie hat, my VVAW button, my ribbons, my Kerry button and took my "New Soldier" book along. The vets — including some of his boat crew — were put in the best row, and when he walked in, he remembered us. After his thank-you speech, shaking hands on the way over, he stopped to see us. We shook hands, took pictures and talked about full funding of the VA: part of his platform. He signed his book, and it reads: "John — Thanks for being part of the journey — John Kerry."

It was far out. Thirty-three years, and the first thing we talk about is the VA. I did a rally at the Italian community center — vets on the top row. He came in, looked around, saw me and Mike Winner, saluted, and gave a super 25-minute speech.

I was at the Teamster endorsement on Election Day and drove people to the polls all day. I had a great time. One person **can** make a difference.

I know VVAW does not endorse political parties or candidates; that's part of our by-laws and a good idea. I do know we need to beat George W. Bush, and we veterans need one of our own in the White House.

Semper fi

JOHN LINDQUIST IS A MEMBER OF VVAW'S MILWAUKEE CHAPTER.

John Kerry's Band of Brothers

BILL ANDREWS

It was not your typical run-of-the-mill Super Bowl party that Sunday evening at VFW Post 4262 in Columbia, South Carolina. Most of the revelers were local veterans rooting riotously for the Panthers while another large contingent was from New England rooting uproariously for the Patriots.

If not for the fact that many of the locals had been working with the New England crowd for John Kerry's campaign over the weekend, the atmosphere might have been combustible. In any case, the mantra that night was that we would leave politics at the front door and only talk football. However, if Tuesday's Democratic primary in South Carolina was not on our lips during the game, it was certainly in the backs of our minds. John Edwards was a Panther fan and John Kerry was, of course, from Boston. The analogy between football and politics couldn't have been more dramatic.

Most of the Veterans for Kerry arrived in Columbia last Friday morning on a chartered bus from Boston; others drove or flew in. Bill Dulling, a Bostonian who was the point man in South Carolina with Veterans for Kerry, had called me earlier to see if I could join his "Band of Brothers," and I had agreed to drive down after work on Friday.

It seemed that the most animated and energized volunteers were those working for Wesley Clark, whose campaign headquarters was on the floor below ours in a building directly across from the state capitol. They were mainly college students who seemed to be having a great time waving to motorists and shouting chants, a din that competed with capitol traffic to produce a near-deafening cacophony of noises. The good-natured citizens of South Carolina merely made the most of this onslaught.

By contrast, our group of old World War II and Vietnam vets looked a little out of place. Despite the fact that we didn't sing, chant or hold massive banners, the press seemed to love us. We received considerably more coverage than we deserved by our numbers. Our advantage was that we spent much more time on the telephones than on the streets.

About two miles from the main headquarters was our telephone center, with crowded rooms set up like a telemarketing center. Our job was to call thousands of South Carolina veterans, making the case for Kerry with as much diplomacy and suggestive power as possible. Each of us had a miniature telephone pad with headset and lists of names, telephone numbers and dates of birth. Each name was color-coded to indicate era of service. Across the hall was another room staffed by our younger college-aged colleagues who called the general public. Their job was more challenging because they lacked the rapport we had with our target audience.

The greatest challenge for me was to learn to block out all the ambient noise from dozens of simultaneous conversations. Another distraction was the work of television news crews who pointed cameras and boom mikes in our faces as we made our calls. Aside from the local electronic media, a Japanese news team filmed us on Saturday and a camera crew from PBS's "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" filmed on Sunday.

Although the work was demanding, I enjoyed the opportunity to talk during breaks with other vets who told their war stories and explained how they got involved with the Band of Brothers. Working the phone on my left was Bob Barrie who joined the Navy in 1942 at the age of 17 and participated in the Iwo Jima and Okinawa operations. After the war he got his doctorate and worked on international trade agreements for the Truman and Kennedy administrations. On a call to a World War II vet on his list, the wife informed Bob that her husband had died the year before and that she was available if anyone was interested in a 75-year-old widow. On another call to a World War II vet, the wife said that her husband, a farmer, was out in the backyard. When asked if she might inform her husband of the call, she answered that he was literally in the backyard — buried. By far, this was the most difficult part of our work. Over a thousand veterans of World War II are dying each day and our calling list, updated a year ago, attested to this lamentable demographic.

On my right was Neal Tallon from Plattsburg, New York, a 58-year-old Vietnam vet who served with the 1st Military Intelligence Battalion near An Khe and was

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Who Is The Real John Kerry?

S. Brian Willson

Listening to John Kerry's eloquent remarks presented before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during Dewey Canyon III in April 1971, helped validate my own Vietnam experiences. His final words still ring true: "When thirty years from now our brothers go down the street without a leg, without an arm, or a face, and small boys ask why, we will be able to say 'Vietnam' and not mean a desert, not a filthy obscene memory, but mean instead the place where America finally turned and where soldiers like us helped it in the turning."

While serving as director of a Massachusetts veterans' outreach center in 1983 I worked in concert with John Kerry after his election as lieutenant governor, crafting programmatic responses to the increasing problems exhibited by Vietnam veterans. John chose to run in 1984 for the U.S. Senate. I became one of a dozen or so Vietnam veterans, called "Kerry's Doghunters," supporting his progressive advocacy for cuts in military spending with corresponding increases in domestic programs. I subsequently served John on his senatorial veterans' advisory committee.

Though John revealed early promise as an independent-thinking U.S. senator, he began to typically conform to Washington groupthink when support for aggressive foreign policy began to creep into his language.

John Kerry, the wealthiest of all 100 senators, is one of the leading recipients of special interest money even as he condemns that money. His unquestioning support for Bush II's "War on Terror" without examining causes, and his support of the draconian Patriot Act and the unconstitutional delegation of authority to wage "preventive" war as Bush II decides, have made Kerry's presidential candidacy disturbing and untrustworthy. That Bush II needs to be banished, even impeached, is a no-brainer. But that our corrupt electoral system offers only two oligarchic candidates, each of whom espouses continued empire through lawless means, demands a more radical "people power" approach. Electing one of two oligarchs simply continues support for our corrupt system, rather than shaking it up.

I plead with veterans of conscience to continue to work for the "turning" of our country!

S. Brian Willson, USAF 1966-1970, "Operation Safeside" Vietnam 1969, VVAW regional contact, executive committee VFP Ch. 56, Humboldt Bay, CA

VVAW FAQ

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porters have participated in and supported the actions of VVAW. One of those members in the early 1970s was John Kerry. Kerry was appointed to the VVAW Executive Committee to assist in preparing Dewey Canyon III, VVAW's limited incursion into the land of Congress in 1971 (Nicosia, 98-99). Kerry made his greatest contribution to the anti-war movement and to VVAW in his speech to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on April 23, 1971 (Brinkley, 371-373: Hunt, 109-110; Nicosia, 136-138; Wells, 495). Content of the speech is found at: http://lists.village.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/VVAW_Kerry_Senate.html.

By 1972, John Kerry had moved on from VVAW (Brinkley, 406: Hunt, 127-128; Nicosia, 211). He was not one of the original founding members of VVAW in 1967.

What was Dewey Canyon III?

The code names for two secret U.S. invasions of Laos were Dewey Canyon I and Dewey Canyon II. The choice of calling VVAW's incursion into Washington in April 1971 was a dramatic one. In terms of media coverage and Vietnam veteran participation, Dewey Canyon III transcended the Winter Soldier Investigation and any previous VVAW action. VVAW members defied orders that they not camp on the mall, led by Gold Star mothers placed wreaths in Arlington Cemetery, demonstrated at the Pentagon and Supreme Court, and threw their medals onto the steps of the Capitol Building (Brinkley, 2-11; Hunt, 94-119; Nicosia, 98-149; Wells, 493-498).

Does VVAW endorse John Kerry for president?

VVAW does not endorse John Kerry or any other candidate for political office. VVAW is a non-profit organization with tax-exempt status. To endorse a candidate as an organization would cost us that status.

Who founded Vietnam Veterans Against the War?

John Kerry was not involved in the founding of VVAW. Kerry had not returned from Vietnam at the time that VVAW was founded. Jan Barry Crumb (later Jan Barry) who served in Vietnam in 1962-1963 and enrolled in and then resigned from West Point after his Vietnam service is the best known of the veterans who founded VVAW. About six Vietnam veterans, including Barry marched under an improvised "Vietnam Veterans Against the War" banner in an April 1967 peace demonstration in New York City. On June 1, 1967, six Vietnam veterans gathered in Jan Barry's apartment to form VVAW. Another vet associated with the early days of VVAW is Carl Rogers. Rogers held a press conference upon his return from his Vietnam service as a chaplain's assistant announcing his opposition to the war. Barry recruited him and at some point he became "vice president" of VVAW. Other early influential members who are mentioned are David Braum, John Talbot, and Art Blank. Jan Barry also lists Steve Greene and Frank (Rocky) Rocks (Barry; Hunt, 10-19; Nicosia, 15-25, f112; Moser, 194; Stacewicz, 193-203).

Did John Kerry state that US troops committed war crimes when he addressed the Foreign Relations Committee of the US Senate?

In his speech to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and in other speeches, Kerry summarized the findings of the Winter Soldier Investigation. (See text of Kerry's speech referenced above.) For a more detailed account of the relationship between the Winter Soldier Investigation and John Kerry, see http://www.vvaw.org/commentary/?id=399.

What was the Winter Soldier Investigation?

In 1971 more than a hundred Vietnam War veterans from around the United States gathered at a Howard Johnson hotel in Detroit, Michigan to testify about their experiences in Vietnam. "Winter Soldier" was a reference to Thomas Paine's "The American Crisis," written to bolster commitment and spirit among soldiers and civilians during the Revolutionary War. Testimony was given unit by unit starting with the First and Third Marine Divisions. During the Winter Soldier Investigation, more than 100 veterans recounted in detail atrocities committed in Vietnam by themselves or observed first-hand. The transcript of the Winter Soldier Investigation was read into the Congressional Record. (Hunt, 55-72; Nicosia, 84-93; Wells, 473-74). The complete transcript can be read online at http://lists.village.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Winter_Soldier/WS_entry.html.

Have the testimonies of the VVAW members in the Winter Soldier Investigation been discredited?

Each veteran's authenticity and testimony were checked before the hearings by Investigation organizers. Who better to authenticate Vietnam service than other Vietnam vets (Brinkley, 349; Hunt, 66-68). Each veteran's authenticity and testimony were checked after the hearings by Nixon's "plumbers." Charles Colson was assigned the task. In a CONFIDENTIAL "Plan to Counteract Viet Nam Veterans Against the War," Colson wrote, "The men that participated in the pseudo-atrocity hearings in Detroit will be checked to ascertain if they are genuine combat veterans." At one point, the Nixon team suggested in a memo about VVAW, "Several of their regional coordinators are former Kennedy supporters." With the exception of the attack on Al Hubbard, nothing worse was ever produced (Brinkley, 356-357; Hunt, 73-84; Wells, 489-490).

Did one of VVAW's leaders lie about his military service in 1971?

Al Hubbard was an important leader in Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Hubbard had been an Air Force enlisted man who actually served. He felt that as a black man, with racism what it is in this country, he had to portray himself as an officer in order to get any respect (Overend, 589; Stacewicz, 293). This was wrong

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Tonkin Gulf to WMD: Lies, Anniversaries, and More Lies

JOE MILLER

"A lie is a lie. It is a misrepresentation of fact."
– Senator J. William Fulbright referring to President Johnson's official statements concerning the Tonkin Gulf "incidents" in "Hearts and Minds" (1974)

This summer of anniversaries marks sixty years since D-Day, forty years since the deaths of Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner, thirty-five years since Woodstock (the real one), and thirty years since the resignation of Tricky Dick. Gee! Time flies when you're havin' fun!

For those of us who served in the Vietnam War, perhaps it is even more important to remember that this August also marks the fortieth anniversary of the Gulf of Tonkin "incidents." The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, passed almost unanimously by Congress, caused nearly three million of our brothers and sisters to be sent into a war that only ended with nearly 60,000 Americans dead, along with the usually-forgotten millions of dead Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians.

As a participant and one who knew the truth behind the lies of Tonkin, forty years on, the questions still arise in those quiet moments each year during the first five days of August: How many might have been saved if I spoke up or acted earlier? How many among the nearly sixty thousand names on that black granite wall might never have gone to Vietnam at all? How many millions of Indochinese might still live, if those of us who knew the truth behind the origins of the war spoke out earlier? How many of the physically – and psychologically – maimed would now be whole? Might we have made a real difference? There are no definitive answers to these questions, but that does not make them go away.

It is true that, by early 1968, with the Fulbright hearings into the Gulf of Tonkin "incidents," most of the truth behind the events was known. It was pretty late in the game, however, and popular support for the war was diminishing rapidly. Still, even then, our national honor was at stake. Our boys in the field had to be supported blindly (and replaced with fresh faces and whole bodies). The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution had been repealed by 1971, but the war would go on. The inertia of commitment to those who had already fallen took over, until the Vietnamese finally won in 1975.

With the approach of the fortieth anniversary of the Gulf of Tonkin "incidents," we should remember the facts behind those lies —lies that drew many of us into an orgy of death, destruction, and dislocation for more than ten years. We must remember how easy it was to lie us into that war, while we are in the midst of a great controversy over the lies that took us to war in Iraq in March 2003. *[See resources below.]*

Now that the United States is engaged in another quagmire-like war in Iraq, this particular anniversary should be important to all of us, including the families of those who lost loved ones in Vietnam (and in the wars since then) and the millions of people at home and abroad who joined with veterans and active duty GIs to end the carnage, then and now. The obvious lies that took us into Iraq one year ago mirror the lies that took us into Vietnam. We must once again join together under the very banner we used then: "Support Our Troops! Bring Them Home Now!"

JOE MILLER IS A NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF VVAW.

Some Resources on The Tonkin Gulf Incidents, 1964

Dale Andrade and Kenneth Conboy, "The Secret Side of the Tonkin Gulf Incident," *Naval History* 13:4 (July/August 1999)

Steve Edwards, "Stalking the Enemy's Coast", *Proceedings* 118:2 (February 1992), pp. 56–62

Joseph Goulden, *Truth is the First Casualty: The Gulf of Tonkin Affair: Illusion and Reality*. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969

Captain Norman Klar, "How to Help Start a War," *Naval History* 16:4 (August 2002).

Miller, Joe, "A Forgotten Anniversary?" *The Veteran* 24 (1994)

Edwin Moise, *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996

Jim and Sybil Stockdale, *In Love and War*. New York: Harper & Row, 1984

"Tonkin Gulf doubts laid to rest," *The Detroit News*, November 10, 1995

U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, 90th Congress, Second Session, *The Gulf Of Tonkin, The 1964 Incidents, Part II,* December 16, 1968, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968

Doug Valentine and Elton Manzione, "The Raid on Hon Me," *The National Reporter* 10:3 (Spring 1987)

Eugene G. Windchy, *Tonkin Gulf*. New York: Doubleday, 1971

VVAW at Times Square anti-war march - New York City, c1972

Gulf-Era Vet Speaks Against War

Paul King

[This is a revised speech made by King in Champaign, Illinois on April 1, 2004.]

At 18 years of age, most of us are still children in our society. Physically, we are grown, but emotionally, morally, ethically and spiritually we are not fully-formed. Many of our children are lured or compelled into the military when they turn 18. This is wrong.

Looking back at how I was manipulated and indoctrinated by the military, I feel a profound sense of personal violation. I can never forgive my country for this. Although I never personally took another life, I was involved in an organization whose business is murder. I was successfully indoctrinated. I actually believed there was nothing wrong with taking the life of another human being. Not only was I instructed in the task of taking life indiscriminately, but mindlessly and with empty rage. I learned how to stab people, shoot people, blow them up, maim and slaughter them. And I was taught that this is not wrong ... that it is not wrong to drop bombs on cities, starve populations, and destroy their environments, because I am an American.

No one is born a murderer. No one naturally believes that killing is right. This is viscerally known deep inside and is a part of what makes us human. When the State takes a young adult from us and teaches him hatred and murder, this constitutes an ultimate violation of the person, his family and his community. His intellect is compromised, genuine emotions are subdued and the person as a whole is made into something less than human.

This is rape. Morally, ethically and spiritually.

Most people are not in the armed services because they want to be soldiers. They're looking for college money, adventure or an escape from poverty. Others believe the American military is an instrument of peace and desire to help others. Many want to be challenged to their physical and emotional limits, to "be all they can be." These are all reasons why I joined.

These desires can be better met through other programs that would not only serve these young adults better, but Americans and people of other countries as well. But we do not fund them. Why? Why don't we expand AmeriCorps, the Peace Corps, Citizen Corps and Freedom Corps so that young people can meet their needs for respect, adventure, money and altruistic aspirations?

Every dollar spent on the military produces fewer jobs than every dollar spent on a social program. And the equipment that our money buys for our soldiers is complete shit. My equipment was defective and poorly-made. My vehicle routinely broke down. Consequently, my job was more difficult and dangerous than it needed to be.

Domestic programs are being dramatically cut. Our schools are buckling under debt. We are ranked 37th for health care by the World Health Organization. We are the only industrialized country in the world without national health care. People can no longer afford to live on minimum wage working two jobs, let alone one. And we spend half of our national wealth on a poorly-equipped military. Where is this money going?

Rather than teach our young people hatred and murder, we should be teaching them the skills of tolerance, understanding and peacemaking. We should be paying them to create domestic commonwealth and provide aid to the international community that would accomplish more toward thwarting terrorism than any number of bombs could ever do. We have the money for this. A strong economy does not need to be based on the military-industrial model.

The image of the soldier as a person of valor is bullshit. Soldiers aren't warriors these days. They're bureaucrats, mechanics, doctors, engineers and technicians. They have no more authority in matters of war and peace than anyone else. We should not be blind, however, to heroic acts sometimes performed by soldiers. We should honor those who disagree with war, but agree to participate. These people are capable of doing much good. They can diminish misery and cruelty in the battlefield. They are necessary for keeping humanity alive in the midst of our darkest moments.

However, we should not confuse admiration for the work of these good people with admiration for the industry of killing. Some of us are lucky enough to choose this way of life mindfully, aware of all requirements and consequences and with intentions aligned with our higher potentials and ideals. Most 18-year-olds are not capable of this. I was not such a person. I believed in war. And I am ashamed of that.

Half of the children born to veterans of the first Gulf invasion have deformities. Our country has poisoned an entire generation of its own people.

Iraq has been bombed and terrorized by the United States for 12 years. We dropped a thousand bombs on them on the third day of the invasion. Each one cost one million dollars. Many were tipped with depleted uranium and we've deposited tons of this dust in their deserts. It's everywhere. The cancer rate among the people there is extraordinarily high.

While I was in the military I was discouraged from asking natural questions that arise in any sane person's mind. Why? Why would we do this? Why would I participate in this? Why would I pay for this? Why are people back home proud of me for this? America perpetuates holocausts across the globe with impunity and our people are blind.

Peace worker Kathy Kelly states that "democracy is based on information." Without knowing the activities of our government, there can be no hope of exercising democracy with any degree of competence to change our culture of war. Ironically, the most important lesson that I learned while I was in the military was from the Russians. *Glasnost* is a word that means truthfulness, openness and transparency.

In the interest of *glasnost* and in deference to our old nemesis, I no longer intend to keep secrets for the government. I will not contribute to the shroud of secrecy that keeps our people ignorant, democracy at bay and, perhaps worst of all, separates and divides us from one another.

Paul King lives in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois.

Band of Brothers

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approached by the CIA for a career in that organization. He turned it down. Incredibly, he informed me that his father was born in 1893 and that his grandfather had been 25 years old when the Civil War began. After the primary election in South Carolina, Neal planned to leave for Florida for five weeks of similar work for the Kerry campaign. When I asked him how he could possibly take off work for that length of time, he told me he had just retired.

The big surprise for me was the number of veterans who were planning to vote for Kerry over Clark. My suspicion is that veterans can identify more with lieutenants than with generals. Moreover, with the momentum generated by Iowa and New Hampshire, many vets told me that although Kerry might not be their first choice on issues or personality, they were more interested in voting for someone who could beat Bush in November.

Late on Sunday, just before we were about to leave for the Super Bowl party at the VFW, Bill Dulling informed us that his pollsters had detected a narrowing point margin between Kerry and Edwards. Pumped up with enthusiasm, the Band of Brothers voted to stay with Bill an extra three days to make phone calls through the election. As I had an all-night drive ahead of me, I stayed at the party only long enough to take a few pictures and have a drink with former U.S. senator Max Cleland, a triple-amputee Vietnam vet who is one of John Kerry's strongest supporters. Leaving at the end of the first quarter, I caught the remainder of the game on the radio and missed the real action on the field and the half-time action on stage.

Bill Andrews is a member of VVAW.

The Past

Horace Coleman

"The past is not dead. In fact, it's not even past."

William Faulkner said that. "You want the truth? You can't handle the truth!" said Jack Nicholson's character in "A Few Good Men."

Ron Kovic, VVAW contact Leland Lubinsky and I were interviewed for ***Primary Report***, a web-based publication staffed by University of Southern California journalism students.

Kovic said "It is so amazing that the Vietnam War jumps to the forefront of one more campaign after so many years." Lubinsky noted that:

National Guard duty through history has mainly been to put down disturbances at home, according to Leland Lubinsky, a California spokesman for VVAW. "Up until the Vietnam War, those in the National Guard were mostly black. When the Vietnam War started, people began to scramble into the National Guard. It turned from 90 per cent black to 90 per cent white." Lubinski said. The National Guard then became a refuge for those young men who did not want to go to Vietnam.

Kovic also said "In the late 1960s, to join the National Guard was clearly understood as avoiding going to Vietnam." A quote from me was introduced this way:

Coleman said it is difficult to treat Vietnam veterans as a group in supporting presidential candidates, because their political stances spread out in such a wide spectrum. "The conservatives think Kerry is too left. And the leftists think he is not radical enough."

Today's National Guard service and today's circumstances aren't what they were "back in the day." Ravers and ranters and the uninformed haven't changed, though.

Disagreeing with someone's politics or actions is one thing; lying about them and slandering them is another. The over-the-top Super Patriot Ted Sampley calls VVAW "one of America's most radical pro-communist groups." He posted a doctored picture at his website showing John Kerry in front of a Viet Cong flag. Sampley is the same "reliable source" who called Senator John McCain (a Vietnam vet and a POW who was tortured) "the Manchurian Candidate."

Never has VVAW been pro-communist. The communist countries that still exist are more into crony capitalism, corruption and semi-dictatorship than Marxism. Democracy is better; we're just into crony capitalism and corruption. If you're sloppy enough, though, any thing left of ultraconservative is "communist."

Facts shouldn't get in the way of opinions but:

* John Kerry did not found VVAW and was never its "leader." He was a prominent member and a spokesman for a time.

* When Kerry and Jane Fonda spoke at the same rallies, Fonda hadn't yet visited Hanoi or made the unwise decision to sit on an NVA anti-aircraft gun.

* Despite the often-obscene email that VVAW get accusing them of being "traitors," giving "aid and comfort to the enemy" and "communists," the FBI never found that to be true.

* When Kerry talked about war atrocities committed by American troops while testifying before a Senate committee, he prefaced his remarks about atrocities by saying "they said." "They" referred to those who testified at the Winter Soldier Investigation.

* Many original (and current) VVAW members feel that Kerry used the organization to advance his entry into politics and wasn't radical enough in advancing issues pertinent to 'Nam vets and the group.

* I've been closer to Jane Fonda than John Kerry was in some of those doctored photos on the Internet. She no more knows me than the valet who parks her car.

The Seattle Times published a story headlined "The Vietnam War: Choices that defined a generation" (February 19, 2004) with this data in it:

Just under 27 million American men were eligible for military service between 1964 and 1973.

Of that number 8.4 million served in active duty.

Another 2 million served in the National Guard or military reserves.

About 15.4 million got deferments, most for education, a smaller number for physical, mental or family hardships.

2.1 million actually saw service in Vietnam.

570,000 illegally resisted the draft.

58,152 were killed; 153,303 were seriously wounded

Sources: National Archives, Reader's Companion to American History

Approximately 57% of the draft-eligible got deferments; only 31% of them served on active duty. A little more than 7% of the draft-eligible were in the National Guard or the reserve forces. Only about 7% of them served in Vietnam.

"Chickenhawk" is a term for people who were of draft age during the Vietnam War and deliberately stayed out of that war but are quick to advocate that some other generation be sent to pull the trigger. Professional big mouth and hillbilly drug addict Rush Limbaugh got a medical deferment because something was wrong with his butt.

People got married, went to college or graduate school, sought medical deferments for minor problems. Some took jobs that gave them draft deferments, tried to influence draft boards or claimed conscientious objector status. Or joined the National Guard or fled the country. Some sincerely opposed the war. Most simply opposed their being in war. That's why there's no draft now. The general public was and is indifferent and the government wanted less resistance to future wars and adventures.

If something doesn't bother you enough to personally do something about it, then it really doesn't bother you. Vietnam and the treatment of Vietnam veterans in America never bothered most of those who are loud, long, strong and wrong now and were silent and indifferent then. Recent events indicate they don't intend to do any better by our current warriors.

It takes more to be a patriot than paying the taxes you can't avoid, flying a foreign-made American flag and saying "Support our troops!" Where were all the armchair patriots when VA facilities were being closed? When Congress tried to cut the troops' combat pay and family separation allowance? When activated Reservists and National Guard troops needing medical care wait like people in a traffic jam? When there's not enough modern body armor for troops in Iraq?

Colonel William Campenni (retired) of the Air Force/Air National Guard wrote a letter published in the ***Washington Times*** ("Bush and I were lieutenants," February 11, 2004). He wrote, "The F-102 could not drop bombs and would have been useless in Vietnam. A pilot program using ANG volunteer pilots in F-102s (called Palace Alert) was scrapped quickly after the airplane proved to be unsuitable to the war effort."

F-102 Delta Daggers were used in Vietnam (1967-68) for air defense missions. The colonel's letter also said:

While most of America was sleeping and Mr. Kerry was playing antiwar games with Hanoi Jane Fonda, we were answering 3 a.m. scrambles for who knows what inbound threat over the Canadian subarctic, the cold North Atlantic and the shark-filled Gulf of Mexico.

Please! There's been nothing in the Gulf but a few airliners off their flight plans — or planes smuggling dope, money or illegal aliens — since the Russians left Cuba.

Other pilots and planes were flying over arctic waters at the same time. They were intercepting fighters and bombers with CCCP (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) on their tails, probing U.S. air defenses. But, how did the then Mr. Bush get to the head of the line to get into the ANG?

Democracy requires an informed — not just an opinionated — citizenry that keeps an eye on the issues, and capable politicians. People used to promote something called "the common good" and to think about long-term, as well as short-term, needs.

The rest of the world has a few educated, intelligent and entrepreneurial people in it. The playing field is leveling. More fingers can pull the nuclear trigger now. We have to pay the cost to be the boss.

Colonel Campenni also made these points:

The image of a reservist at that time is of one who joined, went off for six months' basic training, then came back and drilled weekly or monthly at home, with two weeks of "summer camp." With the knowledge that Mr. Johnson and Mr. McNamara were not going to call out the Reserves, it did become a place of refuge for many wanting to avoid Vietnam.

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Winter Soldier

Donald Dzagulones

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."

December 1776, Valley Forge Pennsylvania. These words were written to inspire a dispirited band of American patriots whose number had diminished due to a series of defeats. Thomas Paine had begun a series of pamphlets which helped inspire the American Revolution. There were those, Tory conservatives, who branded Paine and his fellow patriots as traitorous radicals. The principals of freedom and liberty were radical ideas and independence the treason for which these patriots fought and died. They were the original Winter Soldiers.

January 1971, Detroit Michigan. Another group of dispirited patriots gathered and they too were branded as radicals and traitors. These young men had been dispirited not because of defeat on the battlefield but because of the callous disregard showed them and their brothers fighting and dying in a senseless war. Their treason was to speak the truth. They too were Winter Soldiers, and I'm proud to have been one of them. John Kerry was there, George Bush wasn't — he didn't qualify or care.

History clearly records why the original Winter Soldiers gathered, but the purpose of the assemblage of 1971 is either ignored or distorted. We gathered not to sensationalize our service but to decry the travesty that was Lt. William Calley's trial for the My Lai Massacre. The U.S. had established the principle of culpability with the trials of the Nazis at Nuremberg. Following those principles, we held that if Calley were responsible, so were his superiors up the chain of command — even to the president. The causes of My Lai and the brutality of the Vietnam War were rooted in the policies of our government as executed by our military commanders.

Silence and complacency would have been wrong. We were compelled by conscience to speak out.

In 1971, being a Vietnam vet was not a reason for pride, another fact conveniently overlooked by today's chroniclers and critics. Our return home was anonymous and unceremonious. But we felt a responsibility to those fighting in Vietnam and those destined for the killing machine. Silence and complacency would have been wrong. We were compelled by conscience to speak out.

Hundreds of thousands of citizens marched on Washington to speak out against the Vietnam War. Instead of acknowledging them, the president watched football. And we too were ignored. But thanks to the efforts of VVAW and John Kerry, the Winter Soldier Investigation was brought to Congress. And today the neoconservatives, following the tradition of the Tories, brand Kerry as a radical for his participation in Winter Soldier. Consider that in a senatorial race in Georgia, Saxby Chambliss (a chickenhawk) labeled Max Cleland (Vietnam multiple amputee) as unpatriotic for his criticism of the Iraq War — and won the election. The assault on Kerry will be as cynical and caustic and more disdainful of the truth.

Truth discredits the Bush Administration. The Bush campaign wants us to remember the events of 9-11. I remember the look of fear and confusion on Bush's face when his aide entered the classroom in Florida and whispered the news in his ear. I remember the leaderless vacuum in Washington until all danger had passed. Bush now proclaims himself a "war president" issuing the challenge to "bring it on." Valor is easy when protected by the full might of the U.S. military. Where was this patriotic valor and love of country thirty years ago? Where was this valor on 9-11-01? Bush's valor is as much a lie as is his concern for our welfare and liberties. Ignore his rhetoric but observe his agenda.

America has had the unique ability to meet any challenge with selfless patriots, like those fighting and dying in Iraq today. Being one of those patriots tempered under fire, Kerry will weather the assault of the neoconservatives and quasi-patriots. We then will have a president who is worthy of the office, unlike the manipulative sycophant currently occupying the White House, a divisive liar, an opportunist and a sunshine patriot — never a Winter Soldier.

Donald Dzagulones is a member of VVAW from Michigan.

The Past

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Pilots, he says, were an exception to this — though many were excused from duty early. Because we have no draft now, the burden of being in war is definitely not widely or fairly shared. It's easier to be asleep and just along for the ride while someone else drives the train. But where the train ends up is important to us all. Colonel Campenni also wrote:

If the 111th FIS and Lt. Bush did not go to Vietnam, blame President Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, not lowly Lt. Bush. They deliberately avoided use of the Guard and Reserves for domestic political calculations, knowing that a draftee only stirred up the concerns of one family, while a call-up got a whole community's attention.

Re-fighting the Vietnam War by proxy (which is what Vietnam really was, a proxy war with the Russians) is not pertinent to this election. We paid the Russians back in Afghanistan for their assistance to the North Vietnamese by arming and training anti-communist factions in Afghanistan, which led to the rise of the Taliban and its alliance with al-Qaeda. Which led to 9-11. Which led us to Afghanistan — and us wandering into Iraq.

The current uproar about 'Nam is just unfinished business (for some people). America's internal culture wars and its "business plan" for the future are more important. Bush's "snatch up and trickle down" economics aren't working — for the majority of citizens.

Are we going to jettison and exchange our "useless" retirees and unemployed for younger, less well-paid, illegal immigrants? Reduced Social Security and unemployment checks might go further outside the USA. If we can't produce anything else the world really needs, we can always replace the UN's ineffective peacekeeping forces with our troops and openly become the world's cops.

People used to say Democrats tax, spend, and start wars. BushCo has cut taxes (in ways that disproportionately favor corporations and the upper class) and spends wildly while starting one justified and one unjustified war. It's as if we wanted our part of the world to be a gated community. Meanwhile, the Democrats have become fiscal conservatives and leery of war. Go figure.

We should take good care of our troops and use them well. They deserve that. We go thousands of miles away to look for trouble while not dealing with important issues six feet away. We argue about where to park the car while the house is burning.

We're #1!! At what? Shouting "We're #1?" Looking the wrong way? Moving to Mars?

Horace Coleman is a veteran, poet and writer living in California. He is a contact for VVAW in California.

Cookie Monsters

Marc Levy

I am sitting at the monthly Service Organization meeting. Our group is composed of Vietnam, Korean and World War II vets. All have seen their share. Tonight we focus on what to send the troops in Iraq. The men briefly deliberate, then agree on Girl Scout cookies.

"Boys, boys," says the burly chapter president. "Let's everyone chip in fifty bucks so's we can send a couple hundred boxes." Every man pounds the table: a tribal yes.

I say, "Hold on. What the troops want are flea shampoo, insect repellent, sun screen, foot powder." I say, "You know what? They want tampons to shove in bullet wounds. That's right. Bullet wounds." I say, "That's what they want." Silence. Then from the back of the room, a voice shouts, "And they're asking for condoms to stretch over the 50-gal barrels to keep the sand out." He says when the shooting starts they fire right through them.

But the men are adamant. "Too inconvenient, too expensive," they say. "The Girl Scouts have troop addresses; they know where to send things." I'm standing up. I'm shaking. I say, "Well at least the fuckin' girl scouts can send the fuckin' condoms with the fuckin' cookies." Only one man chuckles.

Later I ask him why no one laughed. He says, "They thought you were a PERVERT." I say, "They thought? THOUGHT? I got news for them: I AM a fuckin' pervert. We all are." I say, "There's not a man in this fuckin' town who does not have lust for young girls. We just don't act on it. What is the fuckin' problem?"

My friend agrees. We talk awhile. He is by nature taciturn when it comes to politics. A Cold War officer turned politician, he must attend all patriotic occasions. But he who last year had strung yellow ribbons along the town's main streets now has big problems with Iraq.

I say, "We're hiding behind Girl Scouts to send our troops, our combat troops, chocolate fuckin' cookies. You got to be shitting me."

We laugh. Then I understand what's gone down. "It's too painful. Thirty, forty years these guys have ducked their private demons. Well, I say send the poor bastards in Iraq what they want. Don't hide

behind future widows dressed in green."

My friend says, "You're right. But cookies are safe and Girl Scouts are sacred." He reaches across a table, knifes open a small shiny cardboard box.

"Here," he says, flicking his wrist to snap the blade shut. "Have a cookie."

Marc Levy is a Vietnam vet who participated in the Cambodian invasion in 1970.

VVAW FAQ

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on his part, but he was a good man, and he worked hard for VVAW. VVAW forgave him for lying, but he shouldn't have done it. This one fact doesn't detract from the tens of thousands in VVAW who did not lie about their service and experiences. Hubbard's exposure (June 1971) came very shortly after Dewey Canyon III and shows how aggressively the Nixon administration scrutinized every member of VVAW. In the end, the Nixon's plumbers exposed only one guy whose records show that he actually served, more than any Chickenhawk in the current administration.

Was John Kerry photographed with Jane Fonda?

Both John Kerry and Jane Fonda spoke at a VVAW rally in 1970 at Valley Forge, PA. (Brinkley, 344-345; Nicosia, 68-70). There is an alleged photograph of Fonda and Kerry listening to other speakers at that rally. Kerry is seen several rows back in the bleachers from Fonda . The photo was reportedly purchased by Ted Sampley for $179 from an anonymous source. That is the same Ted Sampley on whom Senator John McCain has a protection order for assaulting a member of his staff and who called McCain the "Manchurian Candidate" when McCain was running against Bush in the Republican primaries in 2000 (Janofsky, 15). The photo and story can be seen at http://www.washingtontimes.com/national/20040210-094330-7435r.htm.

What is Jane Fonda's relationship to VVAW?

Jane Fonda did not "found" or "organize" VVAW. Jane Fonda was a moral supporter of and financial contributor to VVAW. Jane Fonda (along with thousands of others) was a speaker (along with amputees from an Army hospital) in a VVAW rally at Valley Forge, PA, in 1970 (Wells, 455). Jane Fonda contributed funds to the Winter Soldier Investigation (Nicosia, 79-80). Jane Fonda supported active duty GIs and veterans through her participation in the FTA ensemble (Moser, 91-93).

What was FTA?

FTA (Fuck the Army or Fun, Travel, Adventure) served as a USO for troops that did not require strict adherence to the President Nixon's continuation of the Vietnam War. In addition to Jane Fonda, participants in FTA included Dick Gregory, Donald Sutherland, Ben Vereen, Peter Boyle, Ossie Davis, Holly Near, and Nina Simone. FTA was supported by the United States Serviceman Fund (USSF). From its founding in 1969, USSF supported the real needs of GIs by funding coffee houses, GI newspapers, military counseling, and legal support. Among sponsors and supporters of USSF were Bella Abzug, Shirley Chisholm, Noam Chomsky, Betty Friedan, Nat Hentoff, and several unions and their locals. Another project supported by USSF organized military wives and families (Moser, 91-93).

What is VVAW's relationship to Communism and Communists?

Of course, all Vietnam veterans, at one time, participated in a war that was ostensibly anti-communist. Identifying people as "communists" when there is no longer a unified block of Communist nations makes little sense. The nations that were formerly the Soviet Union are no longer communist. During the 1970's, one would-be communist organization supported the formation of VVAW-AI which is not to be confused with VVAW, Inc. (Nicosia, 310, 490; "Beware VVAW-AI," http://www.vvaw.org/about/vvawai.php).

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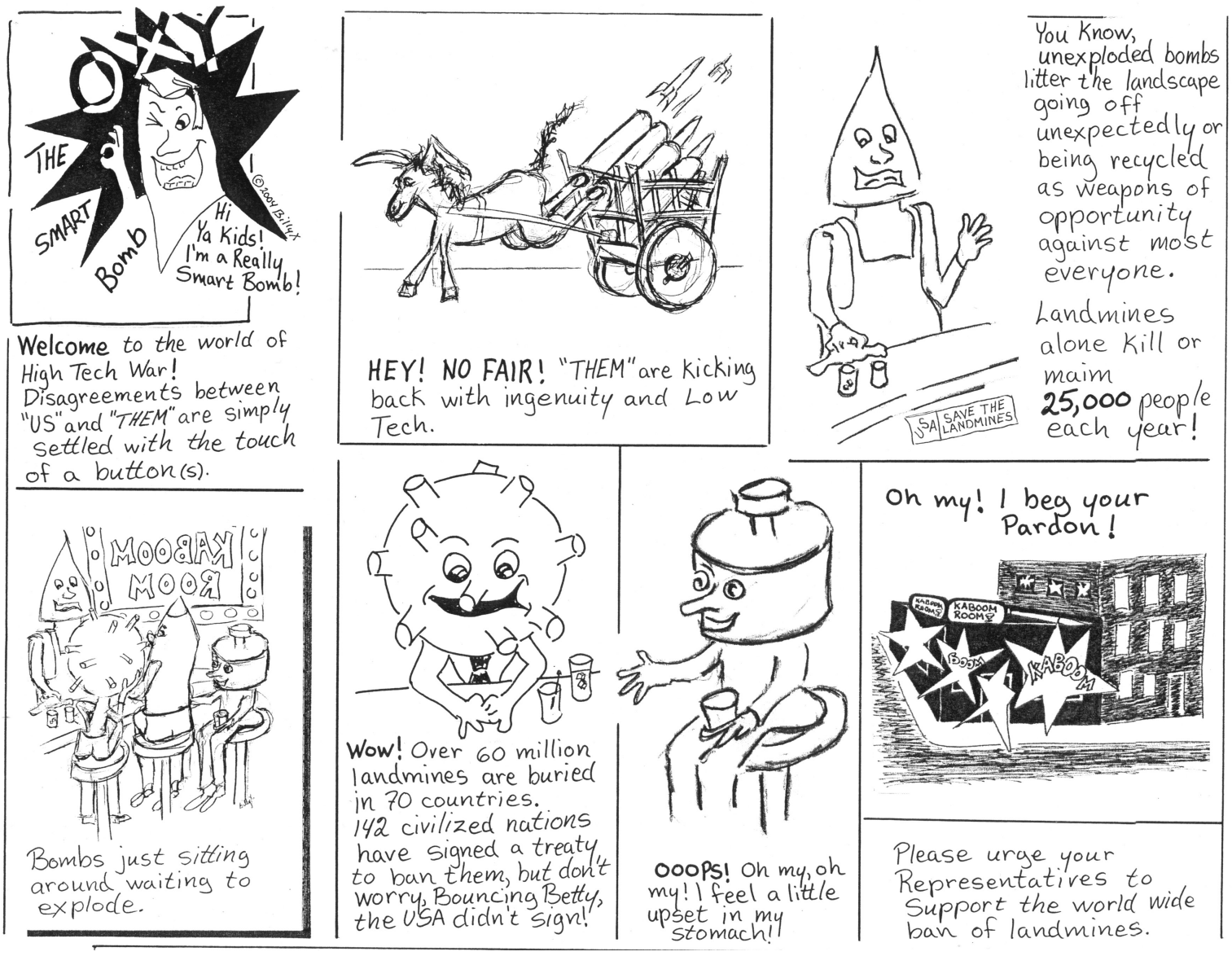


Sheldon Ramsdell Archive

I have recently set up an archive for Sheldon "Shelly" Ramsdell at Cornell University. I am requesting that anyone with Ramsdell-related items consider sending them on to Cornell when it is convenient.

Shelly's archives are far flung. My goals for this effort are two fold: (1) To gather as much as possible at Cornell, and (2) to put the Cornell archivist in touch with other extant collections (McGovern collection, McCarthy collection, No. California LGBT Historical Society, etc.) I am also working with his family regarding securing potential archival holdings that they may have.

Overall, I am trying to create a comprehensive picture of his work through this collection "network." At some point, if I am able to find key pieces, perhaps I can raise some money to begin a non-profit book project based on his photography with any proceeds going to support organizations like VVAW, the Alexander Hamilton and Bob Basker American Legion Posts, AIDS education organizations, etc.

Please contact me directly with any questions, suggestions of people I should contact regarding Ramsdell archival materials, or to obtain information on sending materials to Cornell. Cornell will reimburse you for any shipping-related expenses.

Thanks,

Linda Alband
Executor, Sheldon H. Ramsdell Estate
achiote@sbcglobal.net
650.359.5010

New Film to Shine Light on GI Movement

I am writing to appeal to members and supporters of VVAW to help in the production of a monumental new documentary film. "We Gotta Get Out of this Place!" is the story of how American GIs, in their thousands, created a widespread, unprecedented movement inside the military against the war in Vietnam. Through demonstrations, underground newspapers, combat refusals and more, GIs altered the course of the war and rocked the foundations of the U.S. military. Yet today, the memory of the GI movement has been buried.

With hundreds of thousands of American soldiers once again spread across the globe and signs of opposition once again emerging among the troops, it's time for that memory to be resurrected.

While the veterans' movement — and in particular VVAW — will be a significant part of the film, the main focus will be on the GI movement itself. I am looking for people who:

* Produced and distributed underground newspapers;

* Led or were part of local and national organizations — Ft. Hood United Front, GIs United Against the War, Soldiers Liberation Front, etc.;

* Were jailed for their political activities, such as the Presidio 27, Ft. Hood 43, and individuals court-martialed for refusing duty in 'Nam or fighting racism and harassment in the military;

* Participated in stockade rebellions around the world, including Long Binh Jail;

* Organized Armed Farces Day and other demonstrations and actions against the war;

* Participated in combat refusals and other acts of resistance in 'Nam.

Also, any photographs, film footage and press clippings from those and other events will be very helpful.

I am not a veteran, but from '70-'72 I was on the civilian staff of the Oleo Strut coffeehouse at Ft. Hood, and worked some with VVAW in Los Angeles after that. As a filmmaker, this is a film that has been on my mind for quite some time, but never seemed possible to produce. Today it is not only possible, but quite necessary.

If you were part of the GI movement, I would love to talk with you. I can be contacted at 323-906-9249 or *displaced@mindspring.com*. For information about my previous films, including the PBS series "Senior Year," you can go to the Displaced Films web site, www.displacedfilms.com.

David Zeiger
Displaced Films

Why I Joined VVAW

Rich Peters

I recently attended the first VVAW meeting I've been to in over thirty years. I was asked if I would write a letter explaining why. That got me to thinking about what made me look at VVAW in the first place. Stop me if you've heard this story.

In early 1965 I was a college dropout working a low-skill factory job. In those days, before the lottery system, that made me a sure candidate to be drafted as cannon fodder into the escalating chaos of Vietnam. I knew next to nothing about Vietnam but didn't see any upside to me going. With visions of a successful career in the promising field of nuclear power in my head, I dodged the draft and Vietnam by enlisting into the Navy nuclear power training program. A couple of years later I was serving as a reactor operator aboard a fleet ballistic submarine patrolling the North Atlantic.

Polaris submarines spent about eight months a year on patrol. The other four were spent doing extensive upkeep and sea trials. To lessen stress each boat has two crews, a Blue crew and a Gold crew. Every three months, while the Gold crew took the boat on patrol, we'd return to the States. Each time the news from Vietnam would be worse. Most of the world challenged the U.S. position and in the States popular opinion was changing from support of the war to opposition. Moreover those that I identified with the strongest and held in highest esteem were the most vocal opponents of the war. That led to questions about those who were running my country, bringing us Vietnam, and telling us when to launch our missiles. Then I would follow the Blue crew back to sea to make ready to join in World War Three.

A Polaris submarine is a truly awesome weapon delivery system. They make their own water, clean their air and can stay at sea almost indefinitely. A single submarine has a complement of 16 missiles. Each missile has three nuclear warheads designed to fall in a triangular pattern on a single target. Sixteen missiles for 16 cities. The Tridents which came later had 24 missiles each capable of delivering five nuclear devices on separate targets. Twenty-four missiles for 120 cities. To keep us on top of our game we'd practice "Battle Stations Missile" about once a week followed by "this is a drill." Our unofficial motto became "We Shall Overkill." Overkill is the ability to kill every man, woman and child of the enemy more than once. Back then we had an overkill of five.

There is not a hell of a lot to do on a submarine after your watch but to eat, sleep and kill time. Ironically the most peaceful place on the boat is in the missile compartment. There are lots of unused places between the missile tubes that have reading desks and exercise equipment. I'd spend a lot of my off time there. Amazingly you can block out thoughts about what is inside those missile tubes; you can also let it drive you crazy.

During my last patrol I started thinking about my moral responsibility should "Battle Stations Missile" not be followed by "this is a drill." It would have been difficult for one man to even delay a missile attack, much less stop it. The best thing that I could do is refuse to participate. The day we came in from my fifth patrol I handed my division officer a letter detailing my moral objections to what we were doing and asking for a transfer to another assignment. Yeah, like that was going to do me some good. The day before we were supposed to fly out and relieve the Gold crew, I was told that my request was denied.

Fortunately there were people who went out of their way to help me to deal with the authorities when I missed the flight back to Scotland and patrol number six. The Navy did go out of its way to assure the rest of my stay was no cakewalk, but thanks to an ex-Air Force lawyer, I got away with just a light kick in the butt. So I came out of the Navy with a debt of gratitude and a bit of an attitude. When I met some VVAW people, that became a logical vehicle for dissent.

I was active for a couple of years but after Nixon got re-elected I dropped out. I followed John Prine's advice and "Moved to the Country" in rural Minnesota. Thirty years later and I'm back living about 50 feet from where I was born. This country is still being run by shortsighted, arrogant (insert expletive of choice) who care more for the next quarter profit/loss statement than the people of the world or the planet we live on. I have spent the last thirty years doing next to nothing about it.

So why go back to VVAW? Well these are, for the most part, the same people who have actively opposed U.S. imperialistic policy through all this time. Surely they have felt the same frustrations when another Clint Eastwood wannabe president tries to teach those bad guys a lesson and sends our sons and daughters off to war. They have not given up. The people of VVAW and other groups dedicated to peace and justice have at least put some stumbling blocks in mankind's path to self-destruction. How much further on that path would we be without their efforts? Truly these are the "Winter Soldiers." I am grateful for their efforts. I am honored to be welcomed back.

Rich Peters is a Navy veteran who recently reupped with the Milwaukee Chapter.

Flags In The Wind

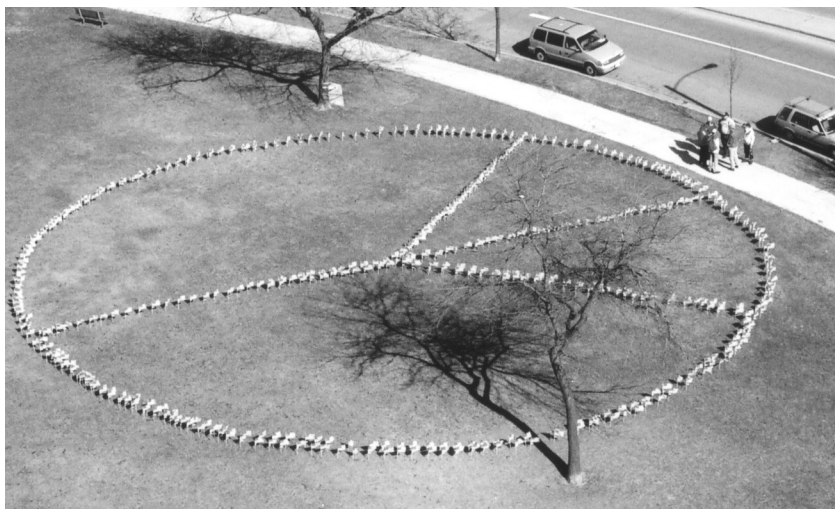
I walked through a park today, after a peace rally,
a year from the day Baghdad was attacked
I saw hundreds of little flags, on sticks poked into the ground,
each representing a soldier killed in Iraq.

A Vietnam vet said there were five hundred and seventy-eight,
the number of dead as of the first day of Spring
five hundred and seventy eight young patriots
who will never see what another summer brings.

Of course that doesn't count the thousands wounded,
many with lifetime disabilities
and there wouldn't be enough space in the park
if we counted all the innocent Iraqis.

I walked through a park today, after a peace rally
may our efforts actually bring peace to pass!
five hundred and seventy eight flags
little flags fluttering over the grass.

Harvey Taylor



Milwaukee, Wisconsin - March 20, 2004

A freedom fighter, a brother, my old friend remembered ... Gary Lawton has died

Mark Z. Hartford

For the majority of women and men in our society, the cultivation of creative abilities, the equality in opportunity, and the freedom from coercion and oppression envisioned in the American dream are empty phrases. The human implications of these phases never penetrate the factories and the mines, or the cold, dead ghetto walls. But there are those women and men who feel such a deep and abiding commitment to the dignity of all working people that they will brave the most despicable outrages of repression and retribution in their attempts to expose the injustices of the American social and economic system. These individuals are rare indeed, for they pay a high price for their commitment to those silenced by poverty and the discipline of the workplace.

Gary Lawton is such a man. His confinement, as we shall see, is testimony to the fact that the ruling powers in the community of Riverside felt obliged to silence him.

Thus begins "The Frame-Up: Outrage in the Desert: The Political Trial of Gary Lawton, Nehemiah Jackson, and Larrie Gardner," the political statement developed by the Riverside Political Prisoners Defense Committee (The Committee) in 1972. The statement was created to help with the struggle to free these three men from jail — and charges of murdering two police officers in their hometown of Riverside, in southern California on April 2, 1971. Officers Christian and Teel were killed by unknown assailants in an ambush at the edge of Riverside's East Side community. Before they died they radioed for help, and within minutes an army of police besieged the black community. Heavily-armed, totally disorganized and in a state of near-panic, they stopped, searched and terrorized anyone who was unfortunate enough to be in the area.

An early report of four men escaping on foot described them as three white teenagers and one short black man with an Afro haircut. Gary Lawton, a well-known community activist, was 33, six foot three and partially bald. Larrie Gardner, a street kid from the East Side, was in his early 20s and also over six feet tall. Nehemiah Jackson was a young divinity student at a Bible college in the desert near Riverside. Larrie and Nehemiah were the unfortunate victims of an attempted frame-up of Gary by the Riverside police department and the prosecutor's office under heavy pressure to get the cop killers captured, convicted and on death row as quickly as possible. In the panicked and disorganized state the police were in the night of the murders, they let the real killers escape.

Some of the police in Riverside used the murders that night as an excuse to vent their panic, frustrations and racist hatred against blacks throughout the East Side. One in particular, Ronald Lund, used this as an opportunity to "get" Gary Lawton for these crimes. Lund's testimony was to be critical to the prosecution's case against Gary.

In the beginning, Gary was their only target. He cooperated freely with them in their investigation and took and passed a series of lie detector tests. In spite of this, the police collected "evidence" sufficient to arrest and get a grand jury to vote to indict Gary. They also developed a conspiracy theory as a backup plan to getting just Gary and for some reason still unknown to me, roped Larrie and Nehemiah into the case. The first time these three men ever set eyes on each other was at their first pretrial hearing — yet "evidence" would prove they conspired to kill the two officers. This evidence proved later to be shown as threatened and bullied prosecution witnesses' testimony, all of whom recanted their early testimony at the grand jury that indicted these three men during the first of three trials, claiming all their testimony of Gary's participation in the murders was false, driven by the threats made to them by the detectives and prosecutors in the case.

The only evidence proved to be truthful was Gary's history as a black "militant and trouble maker." This included his community organizing activities in 1968 to have a park named in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King after his assassination; and his leadership in a citizen's police complaint council established to investigate and mediate police brutality complaints within the black community — an idea vehemently opposed by the Riverside Police Department.

Gary helped found the Black Congress, a multiracial group that dealt with problems facing communities of color. Activities of the Congress included: boycotting stores that inflated prices in the black community while refusing to hire from within the community; development of safe, affordable low-income housing; support for a protest by black nurses of racist practices by the administration of a local hospital (led by Chukia Lawton, Gary's wife, herself another leader within the community); continued complaints about police brutality. Gary and Chukia also organized aid for some in the community flooded out of their homes in 1969, finding them homes, furniture and provisions. By early 1971, Gary and Chukia and the Black Congress were involved in the defense of William Palmer, a black man shot in the back as he walked away from the police. The police had charged Palmer with resisting arrest.

It was this history as an activist that led to Gary's arrest for the murder of these two police officers in early 1971. Gary, Larrie and Nehemiah were arrested and charged with two counts of murder and conspiracy to commit murder. They were held without bail from early 1971 to their release from jail at the end of their first trial in 1973. These three men spent two years in jail without a right to see their friends and children. Chukia was the only person allowed to visit Gary.

So how did Gary, Larrie and Nehemiah eventually have all these charges dropped and become free from this repression? Why did Gary not end up spending the majority of his life in prison like Hurricane Carter, another black man charged with murder by a racist police and prosecutorial conspiracy?

The answer is as American as apple pie. It resulted from a lot of hard work by committed activists from Riverside and those around the country who heard about the case and took it up as part of a struggle to free political prisoners throughout the United States. The local VVAW chapter adopted this case in early 1971. It eventually became a regional and then a national effort by VVAW to free Gary and his two codefendants. VVAW knew only too well that political repression can take the form of arrest and trial on trumped-up charges — the Gainesville Eight trial and other less well-known trials around the country made it quite clear. Gary, a former Marine, joined the list of activists harassed by local authorities through the use of the legal system.

VVAW helped found the Riverside Defense Committee shortly after meeting with Gary's wife, Chukia Lawton. The committee developed into a multicultural, multi-organizational planning group providing support for the legal defense and community support of Gary and the other two defendants.

A word about Chukia Lawton. For me, there has never been a better example of a person guided by great feelings of love then

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Gary Lawton

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Chukia. Love for her community, love for the most oppressed in our society. Love of her family and love for her husband. While she was still allowed to work, Chukia took care of her job and her family and still found time to work full-time on the Defense Committee. She was often heard telling people she had met for the first time who expressed their sympathy for her and her husband that she didn't need sympathy — she had an abundance of that — what she needed was hard work, money and anything else they could offer to help free her husband and other political prisoners. She had little patience with those who turned away from the struggle, yet had an abundance of patience for the failings of others and always a warm smile for all of us during a sometimes very dangerous struggle.

A word about my role in all of this. I believed and still do today that Gary and the other two men had nothing to do with these murders. Gary was charged because of his political activism — thus his status in my mind as a political prisoner. I found out about the situation in 1971, when I met Gary's wife Chukia at an informational meeting that was called to discuss supporting Gary. This led to three years of intense community organizing, fundraising and speaking out on Gary's behalf as the local VVAW chair. For the most part, I was tasked with ensuring the community-organizing component of the effort — ensuring that it happened and that it was coordinated with the legal effort. VVAW helped locate lawyers for the legal defense as well as people for the door-knocking, community canvassing, leafleting and speaking required to maintain community awareness and interest in the trial.

The first trial of the "Riverside Three" was moved out into the desert to Indio, a mostly-white retirement community, in the hopes of an easy guilty verdict of these three "scary" urban black men. Among other things, I become known as the "movement mechanic" during this time, keeping old poorly-maintained cars on the road each day transporting community residents to the trial so Gary could see the support he had.

I found out later that having people show up every day for the trial was the only thing that helped the three men get through without losing their sanity. The night we were able to get Nehemiah Jackson out of jail on bail he walked right up to me, threw his arms around me and whispered, "Thank you; you have saved my life." I had never met Nehemiah before. I was surprised that he'd recognized me. Apparently seeing my face throughout the trail helped him more than I ever knew.

Our lawyers and defense committee members were housed in two cheap hotel rooms in Indio, often not leaving the rooms for days because of the work, except to go to the courtroom. They worked 18-hour days for no pay. They lost their health, and in one case, a job. These beautiful "Norman Nobodies" fought hard and saved the lives of these three men! They are what can make this country the great country it can be.

One of the many community events that we organized during this time included one event with speakers including Bobby Seale of the Black Panther Party, Paul Bocanegra of La Raza Unida Party, William Palmer from the Riverside Defense Committee, Tony Russo (codefendant in the "Pentagon Papers" trial), and our own Barry Romo from the National Office of VVAW. It was a major success and led to a tremendous amount of positive and honest media coverage of this situation for the first time.

The first trial ended in a hung jury, with nine people voting for acquittal and three for guilty. All of the major witnesses for the prosecution recanted their testimony and said they'd had no idea who actually killed the police officers. Officer Lund, the first officer on the scene, testified that he knew Gary was guilty because he talked to him just minutes after arriving at the murder scene. He later admitted that "he might have imagined seeing him" — he never saw Gary that night. Under intense cross-examination he admitted to the following statements made during an in-house interview about the night of the murders: "I was looking for niggers on the night of the murder. That's what I want to kill is a nigger right now. I want to kill him worse than anything I ever wanted in my life."

On the day the trial ended, many of the jurors came over to Gary and gave him hugs and wished him well.

It was now 1973. We were finally able to get bail set for these three men after they had spent two years in jail without a chance to visit with friends, and in Gary's case, to see his two children. Our original lawyers were burned out by the first trial; they had left town. Our committee went back to work and was able to get John Thorne, lawyer for George Jackson, to represent Gary at the bail hearing.

We were successful! The bail was set at $50,000 for each man. The prosecutor was confident a poor group of activists who could hardly keep their cars on the road would never be able to raise this kind of money.

We raised Gary's bail within two weeks by calling on people from all over the country who had money to loan to us on our word that we would return it. One of the people who sent us a couple of hundred dollars was Jon Voight of "Midnight Cowboy" fame. Thanks to the VVAW chapter in the Bay Area with contacts in New York, we received a loan from a wealthy philanthropist of a $50,000 bearer bond — same as cash for whomever holds it.

I remember the night before we were to get Gary out of jail. I took my family to my grandfather's house because he had a big safe in his back room, and my job was to keep the $55,000 we had raised to that point safe. The trust between all of us was evident in the simple fact that I was given that much money by people who knew without a doubt I would be there the next day, money intact.

We bailed Gary out of jail that hot dark night in the summer of 1973. As we walked from the jail to the bail bondsman's office, 30+ police officers ran their cars' sirens, flashed their lights, "jacked" shells into their shotguns and yelled "nigger lovers" at us as we passed the sheriff's department. "Dare to struggle ..." was real that night in Riverside, California. The moment of pure joy for me was being with Gary when he saw his children for the first time in two years. They'd gone from kids to teenagers while he was in jail. Sweet! Every scary moment was paid for by this wonderful moment.

All during this time Chukia was harassed by the police, fired from her job as a nurse and her children were attacked at school. I spent most of every waking day for two years with this beautiful woman. She never hesitated, she never faltered. She was always ready to comfort one of us too afraid to go on. Many other members of the committee were harassed, followed, stopped for no reason by the police, fired from their jobs or warned not to continue with these activities.

It was also during this time that I saw the human side of Gary. My daughter was born in 1973. The day after her birth, Gary and Chukia turned up at the hospital to congratulate us on the birth of our daughter, kisses all around for mom, passing the baby back and forth throughout the visit. Later that night I sat in Gary and Chukia's kitchen drinking beers, celebrating the birth of the littlest radical in the town and the youngest member of the Defense Committee!

The second trial occurred in Riverside, Gary's hometown — where the murders had taken place. The prosecutor gave up on Nehemiah Jackson the Bible student and sent him home, dropping the charges against him. Gary and Larrie, black militant and street kid, would be tried together. Unfortunately for the prosecution, all of their witness continued to tell the truth — Gary and Larrie had nothing to do with the murders. It ended in a hung jury with eight for guilty and four for acquittal. It was now 1974.

For the first time in California's legal history, a man (Gary — Larrie had been dropped from the case, and it was back to where it had begun: an attack on a black "militant") was tried a third time for a crime of which he had never been convicted. It was now 1975. The third trial was to be held in Riverside again but later was moved to Los Angeles. For the first time, the jury included people of color. The jury was out less than an hour and found Gary innocent of all charges.

By this time, I had moved to Ohio with my wife and two children. I received a call from one of my former organizer friends with the news of Gary's acquittal, and danced and cried and laughed late into the night. I later lost track of Gary and Chukia, but have always held them close to my heart.

To hear Gary has passed profoundly saddens me. He and Chukia fought for freedom for all of us. I have no doubt that after they moved to the Bay Area to provide safety for their children (who were beginning to be harassed by the police) they continued the fight.

This has been a difficult article to write. It's not objective; it is my view of events. I am

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Bob Waddell (1952-2004)

GERALD NICOSIA

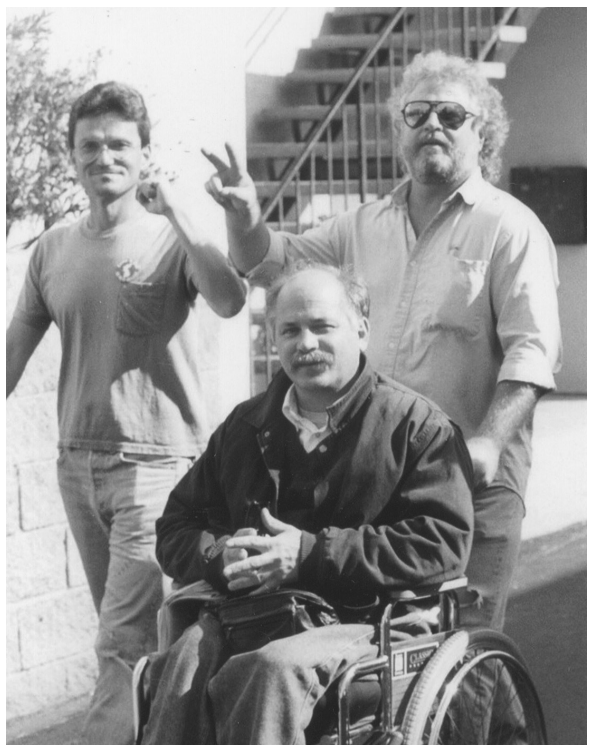
On December 22, 2003, another early member of VVAW passed on: Robert Charles "Bobby" Waddell. Bob was best known as the handsome sidekick and lifelong friend of Ron Kovic, but Bob was an unflagging peace activist in his own right, and gave unstintingly of his time and boundless energy over the years.

Born in 1952, he was a self-described "Army brat" who grew up at numerous military bases, though Indiana eventually became his home. Encouraged by his career Army father to serve his country, Bob joined the Air Force in 1970, and soon found himself working in the mail room in Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base. Bob was wounded by an incoming rocket, which left him with a permanent hearing loss. But two things quickly radicalized him there. One was reading the ***Berkeley Barb***, which was being mailed in from the States. The other was sampling the pure heroin that was available for incredibly cheap prices. Bob soon got into drug trouble; and in early 1971, he went through Nixon's military drug-rehabilitation and discharge program, which, by his own account, was being locked up and left to "jones" for a week with nothing but a minimum of food and water.

Soon after his discharge, Bob joined VVAW in Indianapolis, and quickly became a leader along with Jim Pechin. A year or so later, Bob and his girlfriend Shannon (later his first wife) hitchhiked to California, where he began caring for paraplegic veterans both at the Long Beach VA Hospital — where he was hired as a physical therapist — and in his own home. It was at the Long Beach VA that he met Ron Kovic, and Kovic enlisted him into the Los Angeles VVAW. Later, when Kovic left to form his own American Veterans Movement (AVM), Bob loyally followed him, and took part with Ron in the 17-day hunger strike in Senator Cranston's office in Westwood in 1974, which brought down Donald Johnson, the incredibly inept head of the VA under Nixon. Bob, however, remained a proud VVAW member till his death.

Bob was an incredibly giving person, who often housed down-and-out vets in his own home, but he was left with a substance-abuse problem from his military days that wouldn't quit. He got into trouble in the mid-1980s and did about three years at the penitentiary in Tehachapi, California. Afterward, Bob remarried briefly, and continued his work as an activist for peace and veterans' rights, including Gulf War protests with Ron Kovic. Ever ready to contribute, he went to the Oakland Museum in 2000 to take part in a panel, along with old friend Barry Romo, on the history of veterans' activism.

But in 2001, his girlfriend called the police after a drunken fight, and the Ventura DA went after Bob, supposedly a "crazed Vietnam vet," with the full wrath of the law. No mitigating evidence was presented by Bob's apathetic public defender, and the judge gave Bob ten years in prison because it was a "second strike." No mention was made either that Bob's liver (like that of a lot of Vietnam vets) was nearly destroyed by hepatitis C, that he had at best three years to live without a transplant, and that he was suffering from other major health problems as well, such as diabetes.



Bob Waddell (right) in a familiar role: pushing Ron Kovic's wheelchair to a peace demonstration during the first Gulf War, 1991.

At his sentencing, Shad Meshad, John Keaveny and other vet experts on PTSD tried to make a case that Bob should be remanded to a rehab program, rather than state prison, but the judge ignored them. Bob was sent first to the supermax prison in Delano, then to the California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo, where he did not get the medications, diet, and other special healthcare needs that he required. He got sick in mid-December, and it quickly turned into pneumonia, which took his life.

Bob is survived by his son Zephyr Waddell and many loyal friends. Plans are being made to cast his ashes, as per his wishes, off the Golden Gate Bridge — because of his love for San Francisco and its Beat artists and poets.

FORMER CHICAGOAN GERALD NICOSIA IS THE AUTHOR OF "HOME TO WAR: A HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS' MOVEMENT."

Pedro Pietri

BEN CHITTY

We regret to report the death of longtime friend and sometime member Pedro Pietri, "El Reverendo" and "Spanglish Metaphor Consultant," member of the Latin Insomniacs Motorcycle Club Without Motorcycles, Inc. — writer, poet and dramatist of the Puerto Rican diaspora, on Wednesday, March 3, 2004. The cause of death was stomach cancer, the consequence of exposure to Agent Orange. He was 59.

He was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico, was raised in Harlem in New York City, was drafted into the Army in 1966 and served in Vietnam with a light infantry unit. Honorably discharged in 1968, he returned to New York and to writing, which he began as a student at Harlem High.

He first read his most famous work — "Puerto Rican Obituary" — in 1969 in a church seized by the Young Lords. The epic was published in 1973. Meanwhile he helped start the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, where the distinctive speech of New York puertoriquenos was hammered into poems and plays and performed live in what became known as "slams," and where he put on his own first play, "Jesus is Leaving." His poems were extensively anthologized, his plays widely performed, his advice and encouragement often solicited and amply donated.

He was active in the struggle for AIDS education and treatment. He helped start El Puerto Rican Embassy, a "state of mind" free of colonial domination, with its own passports (recognized mainly by Cuba). In an interview a month before he died, he replied to a question: "What do I think about the war in Iraq? I don't think about it, because the war never ended ... This is a war that's been going on since the invasion of North America."

Pedro Pietri always wore black. Sometimes he said he did this because he had to go to so many funerals — his grandfather killed himself, and two of his four brothers died young. But more often he described his fashion statement in political terms: "I realized who the real enemy was, and it was not the Viet Cong in their black pajamas, but the mercenaries who invaded their country. This is in mourning for that person who died in Vietnam."

Telephone Booth Number 905 1/2

woke up this morning
feeling excellent,
picked up the telephone
dialed the number of
my equal opportunity employer
to inform him I will not
be in to work today.

"Are you feeling sick?"
the boss asked me

"No Sir," I replied:
"I am feeling too good
to report to work today.
If I feel sick tomorrow
I will come in early!"

Pedro Pietri. El Reverendo. Presente.

BEN CHITTY IS A MEMBER OF THE CLARENCE FITCH CHAPTER OF VVAW.

James Major Gates, Jr. - R.I.P.

James Major Gates Jr. died on March 20, 2004 at the age of 69, alone in the hallway outside his studio apartment. He survived Korean combat, numerous atomic bomb tests, a 27-year-long career in a racist military and 26 years of living on a bare veteran's pension and fighting for his retirement and compensation after the Army lost his records. When he died he had been waiting for a decision from the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims. He was a longtime member of VVAW and an activist with the Alliance of Atomic Veterans. We could always count on seeing him at Chicago demos and marches until his health failed him. He was my friend and comrade since 1989, when I filed his appeal with the VA. He was client #1 in VVAW's Military Counseling Service case files. His courage, self-sacrifice and generosity have been my inspiration and he will be missed by many.

Ray Parrish

Ray Parrish and James Gates

Why I Joined VVAW

Lily Lee Adams

I came back from Vietnam in the fall of 1969 and found myself dazed and confused. It seems the Vietnam War was not a popular subject, but it certainly took a lot of space in my own awareness. I couldn't hold a job, I had trouble paying my rent, and I couldn't understand why I was sleeping 12 to 14 hours a day. But on the corners of the streets of San Francisco were these young women collecting money for Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Every time I passed them, I'd put money in their cans and I'd ask about the organization. It was so good to talk to people who reminded passersby that the war was still raging. I had been rejected and treated so negatively by people upon my return (including the VA) that I feared being rejected by my own peers, so I never went to a VVAW meeting. But I never forgot them and was lifted up many times when I read stories about activities like throwing their medals over a barrier and onto the steps of the Capitol.

So here we are 30 years later, still fighting against a war that should not have been, but now we are the older veterans and the war is in Iraq. I took various steps to heal myself, worked for the VA to make it better for our veterans and finally joined VVAW! I have met and worked with many VVAW members here in the San Francisco Bay Area and decided it was about time that I supported an organization that has done so much to honor veterans by fighting for their rights and waging peace.

Lily Lee Adams was in 'Nam with the12th Evac Hospital '69-'70.

Gary Lawton

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sure Bill Branson, Barry Romo and others in VVAW could add missing pieces of the story. It is almost impossible for most people in this country to imagine a story like this.

The lesson for today is this: if the anti-war movement begins to be seen as a real, organized threat, the government will attack and harass activists through the legal system in an effort to exhaust, divert and bankrupt the movement. We need to be ready for this to happen and we need to be strong in our defense of the leadership who will be targeted first. That's my story and I'm stickin' to it!

Dare to Struggle ...

Mark Hartford, US Army, 1966-1969, 2nd Infantry, DMZ Korea, 1966-67, VVAW California Coordinator, 1971-74.

Why I Joined VVAW

Meg Miner

I'm an ex-jet engine and airplane mechanic who is now a librarian in central Illinois. I tell myself I am not as gullible as I was when I was 18. When someone waves a flag in my face, I look at who's doing the waving, where and why. The VVAW gives me a way to feel some pride in an identity that took up a lot of my life and at the same time to express my dissatisfaction with the clean-fingernailed, shoot-first-ask-questions-later crowd in D.C. I'd like to think being the only superpower isn't a good enough excuse for being the nastiest kid on the playground, so maybe I am as gullible as I was when I was 18, but we have still got to try and keep the politicians working in plain sight and for us.

Coca-Cola

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it off. He backs away, turns and walks off.

The "Mike" boat pulls up to the bulkhead. Good timing. We back off, our M-16s, M-60 machine guns and M-79 grenade launchers pointed at the ARVNs. We embark on the "Mike" boat without firing and head out onto the Cua Viet River.

I'm lying by myself on the stern deck of the "Mike" boat as it starts to push through some swells near the river mouth. The sun breaks through. I haven't seen the sun for 25 days. I drift off into my Beach Dream, the one about being on a beach back home, when Platoon Sergeant Head approaches me. I rise up a bit. "Lieutenant, how come the ARVN have the Coke? We do all the fucking fighting."

It's not really a question. I lie back down to enjoy the sun as the "Mike" boat rises over a large groundswell and comes crashing down into the trough of the next swell. The boat shudders from the impact.

Joseph Giannini is a member of VVAW from New York.

Where We Came From,Who We Are,Who Can Join

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. (VVAW) is a national veterans' organization that was founded in New York City in 1967 after six Vietnam vets marched together in a peace demonstration. It was organized to voice the growing opposition among returning servicemen and women to the still-raging war in Indochina, and grew rapidly to a membership of over 30,000 throughout the United States, including active duty GIs stationed in Vietnam. Through ongoing actions and grassroots organization, VVAW exposed the ugly truth about US involvement in Southeast Asia and our first-hand experiences helped many other Americans to see the unjust nature of that war.

VVAW also took up the struggle for the rights and needs of veterans. In 1970, we began the first rap groups to deal with traumatic after-effects of war, setting the example for readjustment counseling at Vet Centers today. We exposed the shameful neglect of many disabled vets in VA Hospitals and helped draft legislation to improve educational benefits and create job programs. VVAW fought for amnesty for war resisters, including vets with bad discharges. We helped make known the negative health effects of exposure to chemical defoliants and the VA's attempts to cover-up these conditions as well as their continued refusal to provide treatment and compensation for many Agent Orange Victims.

Today our government still finances and arms undemocratic and repressive regimes around the world in the name of "democracy." American troops have again been sent into open battle in the Middle East and covert actions in Latin America, for many of the same misguided reasons that were used to send us to Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, many veterans from all eras are still denied justice — facing unemployment, discrimination, homelessness, post-traumatic stress disorder and other health problems, while already inadequate services are cut back or eliminated.

We believe that service to our country and communities did not end when we were discharged. We remain committed to the struggle for peace and for social and economic justice for all people. We will continue to oppose senseless military adventures and to teach the real lessons of the Vietnam War. We will do all we can to prevent future generations from being put through a similar tragedy, and we will continue to demand dignity and respect for veterans of all eras. This is real patriotism and we remain true to our mission. Anyone who supports this overall effort, whether Vietnam veteran or not, veteran or not, may join us in this long term struggle. JOIN US!

Insignia of Vietnam Veterans Against the War

We took the MACV patch as our own, replacing the sword with the upside-down rifle with helmet, the international symbol of soldiers killed in action. This was done to expose the lies and hypocrisy of U.S. aggression in Vietnam as well as its cost in human lives. The original MACV insignia also put forward lies. The U.S. military was not protecting (the sword) the Vietnamese from invasion from the People's Republic of China (the China Gates), but was instead trying to "save" Vietnam from itself.

Our insignia has come to represent veterans fighting against new "adventures" like the Vietnam War, while at the same time fighting for a decent way of life for veterans and their families.

Our insignia is more than 30 years old. It belongs to VVAW and no other organization or group may use it for any reason without permission.

Beware of VVAW AI

This notice is to alert you to a handful of individuals calling themselves "Vietnam Veterans Against the War Anti-Imperialist." Though few in number, they are highly mobile and may show up at meetings or demonstrations representing themselves as VVAW.

"VVAW AI" is not a faction, caucus or part of VVAW, Inc. They are not affiliated with us in any way. "VVAW AI" is actually the creation of an obscure ultra-left sect known as the Revolutionary Communist Party and is designed to pimp off VVAW's long history of struggle. Their objective is to create confusion and deception in order to promote themselves.

We urge all people and organizations to beware of this bogus outfit. Don't be fooled. They are not what they claim. **Forewarned is forearmed**!

SUPPORT VVAW!
DONATE OR JOIN TODAY!

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.
VVAW Membership
P.O. Box 2065, Station A
Champaign, IL 61825-2065

Membership Application

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____
E-mail address _____
Branch _____
Dates of Service (if applicable) _____
Unit _____
Military Occupation _____
Rank _____
Overseas Duty _____
Dates _____

☐ Yes, add me to the VVAW email list
☐ I do not wish to join, but wish to make a donation to the work of VVAW

Membership in VVAW is open to ALL people who want to build a veterans' movement that fights for peace and justice. Most of our members are veterans of the Vietnam era, but we welcome veterans of all eras, as well as family members and friends to our ranks. The annual membership fee is $25.00 (not required of homeless, unemployed or incarcerated vets).

VVAW is a democratic organization. Chapters decide on local programs and projects under the general guidelines of the national program. Chapters elect local leadership and representatives to annual national meetings where major organizational decisions are made and national coordinators elected. These coordinators are responsible for the day to day organizational leadership of VVAW and issuing national publications.

Signature _____

Date _____

Total Amount Enclosed _____

(Make checks payable to VVAW. Contributions are tax-deductible.)

RECOLLECTIONS

Coca-Cola

Joseph Giannini

My battalion, the 1st Battalion 3rd Marines, AKA the "Home of the Brave," has been in the field for about 30 days. I've had the 1st Platoon in Bravo Company for five months. Our battalion is part of the Special Landing Force in Vietnam. We don't have a base camp "in country." We make amphibious or heliborne assaults from our ships. We're used in hot situations. We go to the rescue.

We have been operating around the Qua Viet River in Quang Tri Province. It's the monsoon season. We are cold, soaked to the bone and miserable. We have humped back to the Dong Ha dock area to meet our "Mike" boats, large landing craft that are used to carry Marines and tanks. We are waiting to go back to our ships offshore — LPDs, or Landing Platform Docks.

Two nights earlier Charlie Company took a beating. The battalion had set in on two hills: Bravo Company on a small hill, Alpha, Charlie and Delta Companies on a large adjacent hill. That night a large NVA force attacked the bigger hill and broke through Charlie Company's lines. The breakthrough occurred right in front of my platoon's lines, about 50 meters away. Bravo couldn't help them. If we fired we would hit our own men. All night long we heard them fighting, screaming and dying. There was nothing we could do. Charlie Company took the most casualties. Several of my friends were killed. Bravo One was sent out the next morning to pursue the enemy unit. We captured a few wounded NVA who couldn't keep up with their main force.

This night fight is fresh in our minds as my platoon waits for the "Mike" boats to pick us up. My platoon is tail end Charlie, the last of the battalion to leave. It's late on an overcast afternoon. We are strung out on the dock, a U-shaped bulkhead that extends out into the river. The platoon is very quiet. They're leaning, sitting and lying on the bulkhead. Some are sleeping. They're mostly teenagers, poor blacks, poor Hispanics and poor whites. Like a youth gang, I think, and I'm the warlord. I have no complaints about them. They've done things with me and for me. They trust me and I trust them. We love each other. We love each other to death.

Every Marine has an MOS (Military Occupational Status). We are 03s, Marine infantry riflemen — a badge of honor. We're exhausted, burned out mentally and physically. Our utilities are muddy, torn and worn. We have jungle rot, ulcerous sores all over our bodies. We don't know what's causing it. We smell like rotting foliage. We're all lean except for the FNGs ("Fucking New Guys"). Our skin is sallow. We have stubble on our faces and foul breath. We have dead eyes. In an instant we will be cruel, dangerous and deadly. Right now we're just exhausted and quiet.

Suddenly a large truck, a deuce and a half, pulls right up onto the dock and stops in the middle of us. It's a new truck, filled with ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) troops. They are wearing clean new utilities and brand-new flak jackets (which we don't have). Some are wearing cowboy hats. They're clean and dry, in a good mood, joking and laughing. All the noise and activity has stirred my platoon. We turn toward the ARVNs in our midst. The ARVN standing behind the driver's cab raises a can of Coca-Cola. Looking down on us, he says, "Hey, Marines. You want Coca-Cola?"

Now he's got our full attention. Holding up the can higher, he adds, "Marines, you want? Coca-Cola, one dollar."

Platoon Sergeant Head yells over to me, "Hey, lieutenant, do you believe this fucking shit? These fucking ARVNs wanna sell us our own fucking Coke."

I stand up, walk toward the truck and order, "Bravo One lock and load." Loud clicking sounds, metal against metal, as every Marine puts his weapon on safety and chambers a round. This is serious. This is what we do when we think the enemy is nearby. We are ready to kill for Coke. The ARVNs stop joking and laughing. They realize we're deadly serious. "Squad leaders, designate a fire team to take the Coca-Cola from these fuckers!"

Two fire teams — about ten Marines — descend upon our allies while the remaining Marines provide cover for them at gunpoint. We take the Coke — six cases — along with their flak jackets and cowboy hats. The ARVNs are terrified: caught up and paralyzed in their fear. They don't even attempt to back up or pull off.

An ARVN officer walks over to me. He must realize I'm the honcho. He's smiling and speaking at me, but I don't respond. Vietnamese men are physical with one another. They hold hands, put their arms around each other. The ARVN officer attempts to put his arm around my shoulder. I push

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NYTS CWS www.danzigercartoons.com April 8 2004 1975